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AN
A D D R E S S
TO THE
P U B L I C,
ON THE
EXPEDIENCY of a REGULAR PLAN
FOR THE
MAINTENANCE and GOVERNMENT
OF THE
P O O R:

IN WHICH ITS

Utility with respect to Industry, Morals, and Public
Œconomy, is proved from Reason; and confirmed
by the Experience of the House of Industry lately esta-
blished in Dublin.

WITH SOME

General Observations on the English System of Poor Laws;
and an Examination of the Chapter in Lord Kaims's
Sketches of the History of Man, relative to the Poor.

To which is added,

An ARGUMENT in Support of the RIGHT of the
POOR in the kingdom of IRELAND to a National
Provision.

By RICHARD WOODWARD, LL. D. K

Dean of Clogher, and Chancellor of St. Patrick's, Dublin.

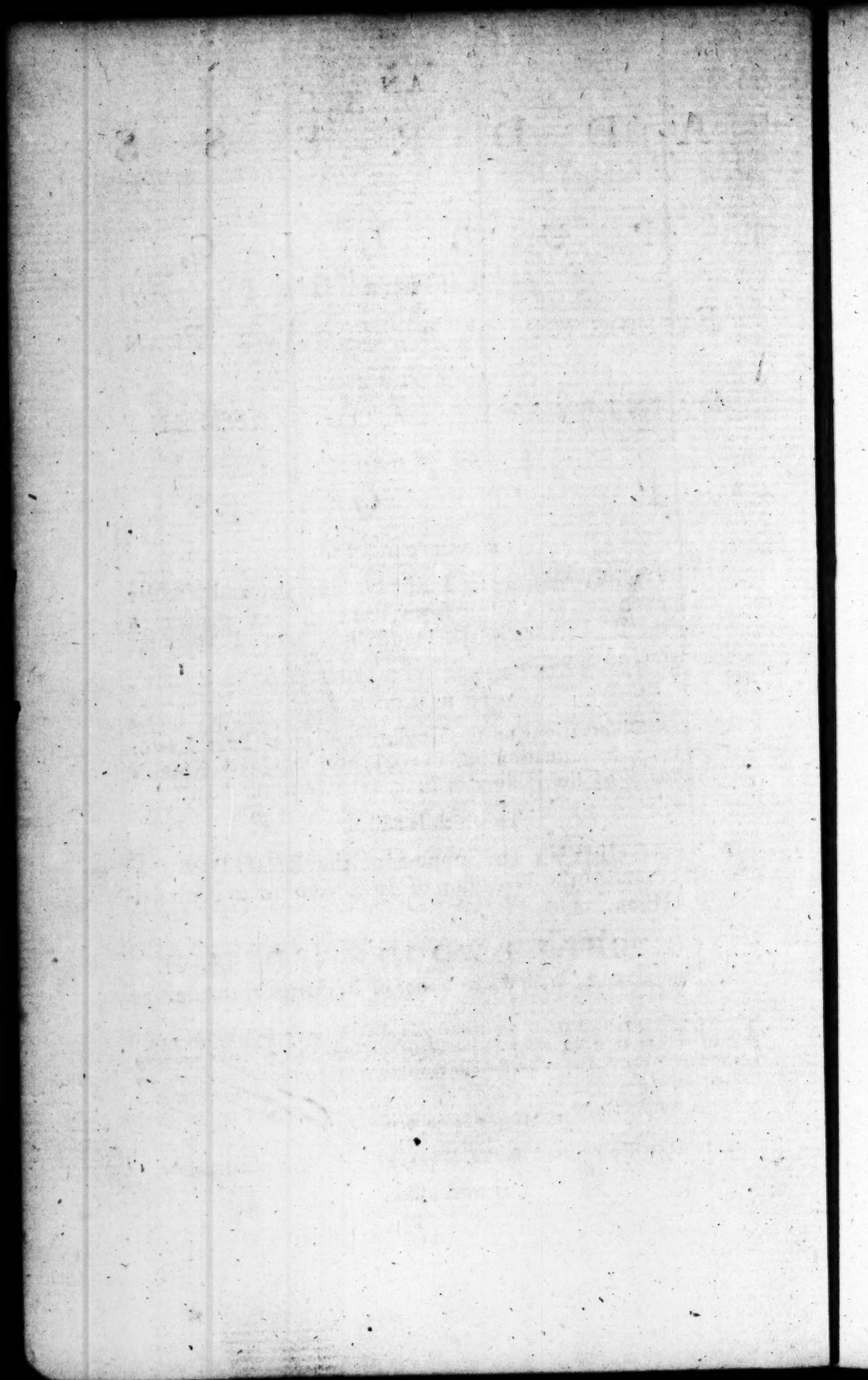
Πτωχοὶ μὲν οὖν καὶ ἐν τῇ πόλει γίνεσθω. PLATO de Leg. lib. 12.
Δηλον ἄρα ἐν πόλει οὐκ ἂν ἴδῃ πτωχὸς, οἳ εἰσι πού ἐν τούτῳ τῷ τόπῳ
ἀποκατεσκευασμένοι κλισίαι τε καὶ βαλάντιοι, καὶ προστυλοὶ καὶ παλίων τῶν τοιούτων
κακῶν δημιουργοί. PLATO de Rep. lib. 8.

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P R E F A C E

T O T H E

E N G L I S H E D I T I O N .

AS these Tracts, the first of which was printed in DUBLIN several years ago, were written for the use, and of course refer to the local circumstances, of another kingdom ; some apology from the Author seems necessary for their publication in this. He would never have thought of submitting either of them to the English reader at any other than this critical point of time*, when the Le-

* This Preface was written during the sitting of the last Session of the British Parliament.

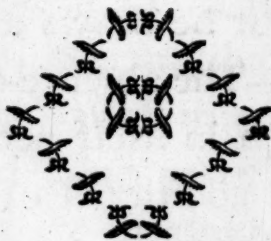
gislature of GREAT BRITAIN have it in their contemplation to change the mode ; and a gentleman of high station, of long experience, and of rank too in the learned world, publicly arraigns them for having adopted any System, of providing for the Poor. With respect to his pernicious principles, the Author flatters himself, that they receive a full confutation in the moral reasoning of his first pamphlet, and the remarks in the second. With respect to determining the judgment of the public, on any future measures for the relief and government of the Poor, it may perhaps be not totally useless to inform them of the advantages derived from the establishment of a House of Industry, to the city and neighbourhood of DUBLIN (a district probably containing 150,000 souls) in

P R E F A C E

in point of economy, police, industry, and morals.

If the first of these tracts should fall into the hands of any gentleman possessed of property, real or personal, in *Ireland*, and prevented by accidental circumstances from residing in that kingdom, it may possibly serve to give him a stronger impression of the distress of those from whose labour he draws a part of his affluence.—The absence of the landlord, though in itself perfectly justifiable, is an additional cause of that distress, as the poor tenant naturally looks up first to him for the encouragement of his industry, and the supply of wants. To this case, the argument in favour of the right of the Poor to relief on the footing of justice, applies with double force. It is becoming in any man to be an advocate

vocate for those, who are incapable of stating their own rights; but in a parish minister, the natural guardian of his poor parishioners, it is an official duty.



ADVER-

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE shortness of the time, allowed to the Author for drawing together his ideas on a subject so extensive (and rendered more intricate by the necessity of obviating the alarm excited by the known expence of the English system for the maintenance of the Poor, as well as of effacing any impressions, from the authority of Lord KAIMS, unfavourable to every legal establishment for that purpose) will apologize to the candid reader for omissions, as well as for inaccuracies, whether of arrangement or language. If any errors should be discovered in the general principles or reasoning, for them he has no excuse to offer—His opinions on this subject are the result of mature thought, and full conviction.

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AN
ADDRESS
TO THE
PUBLIC, &c.

AS the opinions which I submitted to your consideration some years ago, on the deplorable state of the poor in this kingdom, and the justice and expediency, as well as the mode of making a national provision for them, were honoured with distinguished marks of approbation from several respectable bodies of men; and so far countenanced by some gentlemen (of the first distinction for rank and abilities) in their legislative capacity, as to have led to

two successive Acts of Parliament for the regulation of the Poor ; I am encouraged to stand forth, once more, at the instance of the Governors of the House of Industry, in Dublin, as an advocate for that important institution, which owes its establishment to those laws, and to your munificence. I was first induced to hazard my opinions on this delicate, and at that time invidious subject, from a persuasion, that the obligation of relieving the Poor had not been fixed, even by moralists, on its best foundation, and that a prudent regulation of them was an object of the first importance in every view, whether moral or political. Impressed as I was with a conviction of the duty not to suppress a train of thoughts so interesting to mankind, I still felt the difficulties of the undertaking, from the extent and intricacy of the matter,

ter, from the novelty of my ideas, and still more from my own want of authority. I was well aware of the complicated risk to myself, a stranger in a very private station, at once to advance a new moral theory, to presume (with what expressions of deference soever,) to point out a duty to the legislative power, and to venture to arraign the police of the kingdom, in opposition to the prejudices of most, and the supposed interest of all; those friendless wretches excepted, for whose rights I undertook to plead. But I was supported by a consciousness of the rectitude of my motives, and the clearness of my cause. For I was sensible that I was not obtruding on mankind crude and hasty notions, but opinions, the result of enquiry and reflection, and of as fair a balance as I could make, from observation in different parts

of Europe, of the bad effects arising from the want, or the abuse of a *Poor Law*. The candour and humanity of the Irish nation inclined them to listen to sentiments, however strange and unpleasing, which tended to ascertain the rights, and promote the happiness, of human nature; and truth prevailed with a progress rapid beyond my hopes. In the course of a few years, I had the unspeakable satisfaction, of seeing corporations erected by Act of Parliament for the relief and regulation of the Poor, in the several counties of this kingdom; and by virtue of that law, a great establishment in the metropolis, set on foot and conducted by gentlemen of the most respectable characters of all ranks, professions, and religious persuasions, with such an unprecedented union, as probably nothing but the extensive

benevolence of their common object could have inspired, and with a liberality of sentiment which does honour to this age and country. The efforts of such an union could not fail of success. The nuisance, grievous beyond the experience of other great cities, and from its greatness esteemed to be beyond a remedy, is actually suppressed. Experience having evinced the practicability and usefulness of the plan, it has accordingly been copied by many cities and towns of the first importance. The benefits of the institution are no longer a matter of theory and conjecture; they are universally felt; and acknowledged by the testimony of a general bounty, the surest evidence of general approbation.

But, flattering as these appearances are, it becomes those who have
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the conduct of this charity, to warn its well-wishers, by no means to lull themselves in a security that its foundations are firmly fixed. The present universal approbation is excited by the recollection of a recent and intolerable grievance ; but the efforts of bounty will naturally grow languid, as the memory of the evil shall gradually wear away. It will appear from these papers, that some regular fund will become necessary ; and that you must soon make your option, whether you will suffer this establishment to fall, and call back the complicated miseries it has for a time removed, (but which will return after this check with redoubled violence,) or whether you will give your sanction to the petition of a corporation, who have hitherto conducted it so much to your

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satisfaction, for some *moderate* aid from Parliament *towards* its support. And I flatter myself that it will appear too from these papers, that your prudence is as much engaged as your humanity, that the Rich are as deeply interested as the Poor in its preservation. For in the perusal of them you will observe, that I no longer dwell on the obligations of private duty to relieve distress, or of national justice to secure to every subject a supply of the wants of nature. These truths, as I have elsewhere proved *, stand on firm and indisputable ground.—I shall now view a public maintenance of the Poor as a matter of mere œconomy; making my appeal solely to your interest, not (as I safely might) to your benevolence and compassion.

* In my Argument for the Poor, published in 1768.

Of the political expediency of some regular plan for the support and government of the Poor.

IF I were to enlarge on the various benefits resulting to the Public from a good Police with regard to the Poor, I should swell the bulk of this address far beyond my present intention, and the purpose for which it is written. In my argument above referred to, I have already shewn, that it tends to increase the number of the people, by preserving the lives of the infant sick, and aged poor; to promote industry by suppressing the idle vagrant, and preserving to the public that portion of labour, of which the infirm Poor are still capable. I might add the advantages, political as well as moral, of reducing to an orderly and religious discipline in a well governed

verned family, those whom a vagabond course of life would otherwise expose to numberless excesses of * intemperance and debauchery †, whom the trade of begging would constantly engage in the practice of deceit, and the profanation of the name of God, and by its uncertainty must occasionally drive to the commission of felonies, ‡ even for the support of life. I might urge the fatal consequences of bringing up children in idleness, ignorance, and

* Many of the lowest shops for retailing spirituous liquors, which were a nuisance to their respective neighbourhoods, are shut up in consequence of the suppression of common Beggars.

† It appears from the accounts of the Foundling Hospital, that an extraordinary number of Infants infected with the venereal disease were received there, immediately on the execution of the law, whom their mothers, or other young women, who used to lead about to beg, until they were obliged to quit that idle course of life, and resort to industry.

‡ The number of persons brought before the sitting Justices for frays and petty larcenies, as well as of causes in the Court of Conscience, is sensibly lessened.

vice ; and the practices but too common of borrowing, stealing*, and (however repugnant to nature it may appear) of mutilating infants to render them instruments of this shameful and pernicious trade. I might urge the collateral bad effects of the resort of Beggars to the doors of private houses, by the corruption of servants, and in some cases by the communication of infectious Distemper †. I might urge the loss to the real Poor by the practices of the impostor, who not only intercepts the

* When the corporation for the regulation of the Poor issued to 970 persons, badges, and licences to beg, it appeared from the certificates of the parochial committees, that scarce any one of them had young children. Whence then was the number of begging children got, which swarmed in our streets ?

† That this is not an imaginary danger, may be inferred from a provision in the English statute of 27 H. 8. c. 25. against common doles from that apprehension ; and a resolution of the Irish Commons in the year 1661, that all Beggars should be driven out of the City of Dublin by the Magistrates, to prevent the spreading of infectious distempers.

relief intended for distress, but wears out by vexatious importunity the very spirit of alms-giving. I might urge the tendency which the daily sight of such wretched objects, and the frequency of imposture must have, to render familiar or suspicious to us, the miseries of our fellow-creatures, to stifle the early sensations of compassion in younger minds, and in all to sap the foundations of that amiable virtue. I might urge the unequal distribution of charity amongst deserving objects, as from accidental circumstances one shall procure more than an adequate support, whilst another, of equal or perhaps superior merit, shall languish unnoticed, and of course unrelieved. I might aver (and refer to the trading inhabitants of the city of Dublin for the truth of the allegation) that the suppression of Begging has checked

the illegal combinations of journeymen, so fatal to the manufactures and to themselves, and revived a spirit of industry throughout the labouring class of people, by cutting off this usual resource of idleness and obstinacy. I might urge the perpetual interruption of the business of the shop-keeper ; the inconvenience to the passenger ; the cruelty, the horror, and the danger of exposing loathsome, infectious, and frightful objects in the streets, (some of whom were admitted into the House of Industry, at its first opening, in the agonies of death) and the consequent disgrace of our police, in this respect unequalled in any part of Europe. But to all these particulars, your own experience will bear a decisive testimony. I shall therefore confine my proofs in favour of a public establishment to the

the consideration of œconomy, the only plausible source of opposition to so salutary a scheme. And if the proposition, *that a plan sufficiently extensive to provide for all the Poor in this kingdom is really calculated to save expence*, should appear paradoxical to the reader, he is only intreated to suspend awhile his decision, and not to permit an indistinct idea of the evils of the English Poor Laws, (which shall hereafter be considered) so far to possess his mind, as to preclude his attention to the arguments in support of it, to my apprehension unanswerable.

A Public Regulation of the Poor lessens the number to be relieved.

THE proof of this is very short and decisive : for it must be clear to every man, who attends to this subject, that so long as any persons in
want

want remain unrelieved, and indiscriminated from the impostor, a door is opened for Begging in its full extent: it is authorized by an indisputable claim, that of necessity. Those who are only disinclined to industry, have the same licence to address the unwary passenger for alms, as those who are entitled by distress; and being practised in deceit, and hardened against shame, will probably extort more from him than the modest sufferer, overwhelmed at once with misery and confusion, and unable to relate his sad story. But whatever may be the distribution, the burthen of supporting both is thrown on the Public. Humanity forbids to let them perish indiscriminately, they must both be maintained. A Regulation for the Poor will draw the line, and of course lessen the number. In what proportion, must vary

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according to local circumstances ; but I imagine the most favourable examiners of the pretensions of Beggars, would not give their sanction to one half of those who follow that wretched occupation. Nor is this idea founded on conjecture only, for as soon as the Corporation, instituted for the relief of the Poor in the City of Dublin, had distinguished the real object from the impostor by a badge, the streets seemed comparatively clear. But this fact will be more fully stated hereafter, and no more is necessary to prove, that a Public Regulation of the Poor must lessen the number to be relieved.

A Public Maintenance, properly administered, will diminish the expence of supporting a given number.

IN order to state the comparative expence, we must assume as the foundation of the calculation in either case, that the persons in question are to have the wants of nature supplied. By which I would be understood to mean such accommodations, as the Industrious Poor can earn at the lowest rate of wages. To more they are not entitled ; nay, more would be prejudicial in many respects ; and on less they can hardly subsist ; at least in this kingdom. On these principles, I shall state the comparison as minutely as I can.

If, for instance, 500 grown persons (the average number in the House of Industry in Dublin) were to be maintained by casual alms, many of them by lucky accidents,

dents, an imposing appearance, or skill in their trade, will gain more than a bare livelihood. One of the immediate effects of the suppression of Begging in Dublin, was the failure of many of the low retailers of spirituous liquors. Now all expence beyond what is requisite to provide for the Poor the necessaries of life, is evidently a dead loss to the Contributor, and at the same time holds forth a temptation to idleness. Let us then compare the expence of providing bare necessaries either at large, or in a House of Industry.

Lodging for 500 at 6d. per week a-head (the lowest rate in this city) amounts to 650l. per annum, a sum far beyond what would attend a House of Industry for that number, unless there be a shameful profusion in building, furniture, or servants wages : whoever is disposed to take that trouble,

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ble,

ble, may see the difference from the annual accounts of the House of Industry.

As to the articles of diet, fuel, and candles, can it bear a moment's doubt, that an individual Pauper, who must ever purchase in small quantities and at the highest rates, cannot supply himself on as cheap terms, as the Purveyor of a well managed Hospital, who buys large quantities, at the cheapest seasons, with ready money?

With respect to cloaths, the same advantages obtain as to the first purchase, together with the certainty of preserving them by constant repairs and cleanliness, and transferring them in case of deaths, which must be very frequent in a number composed entirely of the aged and infirm.

With respect to medicine, if the Beggar be not received into some other
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Hospital, where probably the expence will be equal, he is abandoned to perish; either by hunger, if confined at home, or by disease, if exposed to the severity of the weather.

That the number of persons lost by untimely death, where the poor are in a state of common Begging, must be very considerable, may be inferred from this circumstance: that in the Infirmarys of the House of Industry in Dublin, from the age and infirmities of the Poor, in spite of comfortable lodging, a healthful situation, exact attention to cleanliness and pure air, proper food, competent cloathing, temperance, and medical assistance, the average number of sick amounts to upwards of one-tenth; I allow that a *saving* would be made by leaving the sick Poor to perish in the streets, and that some *similar* in-

stances of œconomy would arise from permitting them to suffer, as long as their wretched lives endured, the united miseries of hunger, cold, and nakedness. But *such savings* are excluded from this calculation, as all are to be supplied with the necessaries of life, on the footing of the lowest class of labourers: and, on that supposition, it is evident they can be supported at the smallest expence in a public establishment; even without any consideration of the aid derived from the produce of their own labour, which would be totally lost in a vagabond life.

On the whole then, either there is some defect unobserved by me in this train of reasoning, or *a public regulation of the Poor must lessen the number to be relieved*; and a public maintenance must diminish the expence of supporting a given number; consequently,

frequently, the mode of leaving them to casual alms, is as improvident as it is inhuman and unjust. The only causes which I can assign for a contrary opinion are, that the careless never calculate, as they do not feel, the loss of money gradually crumbling away in occasional alms; and the callous are apprehensive of losing an exemption, which a bad police suffers them to derive from their want of feeling; and dread the idea of sharing the common burden, however lessened by a better management, in proportion to their ability. But whether these principles are justified by fact, will best appear from

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A calculation of the sum annually saved to the Inhabitants of Dublin by the establishment of the House of Industry.

THE Corporation for the regulation of the Poor thought it proper to begin, by an accurate enquiry into the number and circumstances of those, who could not subsist without Begging in the Streets; and for that purpose called to their aid committees consisting of the Clergy, and some of the most respectable inhabitants in the several parishes of Dublin, to make that enquiry in their respective districts; whose certificates, specifying minutely the circumstances of the case, and signed by a quorum of three, entitled the Pauper to a badge and Licence to beg throughout the county of the city, till a House of Industry could be provided. Of these badges they distributed 970, and

and were alarmed by a subsequent demand for several hundreds more. Yet, great as that number appeared to the Corporation, they had the satisfaction of observing, that the alarm taken by those who despaired of procuring Badges, (and who, from fear of the coercive powers of the law, either withdrew from the city, or betook themselves to useful Industry,) had removed so much a greater number, that the streets appeared comparatively clear. From that appearance, from the further probability that in the mixed multitude of Beggars, not one half could have passed so strict an examination, and the consideration that scarce any Children were found to belong to those who were intitled to badges, it was universally allowed, that the gross number infesting these streets must have far exceeded 2000. On the supposition
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of

of 2000 we shall proceed to calculate the amount of the sum levied on the inhabitants (in a mode productive of a thousand other mischiefs) for their support.

Lodging for 2000 at
6d. per week. - £.2600 per ann.

Cloathing for ditto,
(for even old
cloaths given to
them were of some
real value) at
£1 per ann. - 2000

Food, coal, and candles, at 3d. per
day, or 4l. 11s. 3d.
per annum. - 9125

Total expence 13725

for the mere necessaries of life;
without allowance of medicines
for the sick, spirituous liquors, or
any other luxuries; whereas (as I
before

before observed) several of the low shops for retailing spirituous liquors were shut up on the opening of the House of Industry. Some eminent manufactures, with whom I have conversed on this subject (from observing repeated instances of journeymen quitting their looms, &c. to follow Begging, as a more beneficial occupation), stated the gains of a common Beggar at 6s. per week, at the least, which on the number of 2000 would amount to £. 31200 per annum. Whatever the sum might be, it was levied principally on the industrious; as the doors of the shopkeeper were open to the Beggar, and he was obliged almost at any rate to buy off * the interruption which they

* At such a height was this nuisance arrived, that many if not all the shopkeepers were under a composition with a certain number of Beggars, to whom they gave a weekly pay, on condition of their not molesting their doors, and interrupting their business.

gave to his trade ; but on the sup-
position as above of bare necessities,

The expence amounted to - - - £. 13725

Total expence of the House of In-
dustry per annum - - - 3600

Annual saving to the inhabitants
of Dublin - - - £. 10125

Annual profit to the Public from
the labour of 1500 persons, now
driven from begging to industry,
at about 7l. a year per head, the
smallest sum on which they could
subsist - - - - £. 10500

But as it may be insinuated, that
however plausible it may appear, that
the Poor would be more cheaply sup-
ported in a collective body than sepa-
rately ; yet in fact, from the negligent
or corrupt conduct of such establish-
ments, the reverse is true ; let us now
compare the expence of maintaining
500 common Beggars, with that of
supporting the like number of Poor in
the House of Industry in Dublin, even
in

in the infant state of its manufactures: and the account will be found to stand thus:

Maintenance of 500 common Beggars at the least possible sum, being $\frac{1}{4}$ of the sum above-mentioned, £. 343 1 5

Gross expence in the House of

Industry about - - £. 3600

Deduct cost to beadles who

take up Beggars, and ob-

lige the other 1500 to re-

sort to useful labour a-

bout - - £. 120

Infirmary for 50 at (suppose)

5 l. per head per annum 250

Profit on the labour of such

of the 500 as are able to

work - - - 270

640

Expence for maintenance of 500

in the House of Industry - 2960

Annual saving on that number 471 5

343 1 5

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And

And as the race of inveterate Vagabonds will become gradually extinct (for no children are permitted to be trained up to Begging), there is almost a certain prospect that the persons to be received into this house will be fewer in number, and more amenable to order and industry. Regularity, temperance, and the constant performance of religious duties, have already produced in the house, a sensible reform; and as in so short a time 570 have been discharged, on security that they would return to labour, this institution must by degrees affect the morals of the whole lower class of people. On the whole, then it tends not only effectually to relieve the wants, to increase the industry, and to reform the morals of the lower people, to preserve their children from corruption,

tion, to remove an odious nuisance, and to improve in various ways the public police, but to effect these national purposes at much less than one third of the expence, formerly lavished with a profusion ineffective to the real Poor, though burthensome to the Rich; and (by the encouragement of Vagabonds) at once pernicious and disgraceful to the Public. Whilst I am enumerating these benefits, I am bound in justice to mention to whom the Public is principally indebted for them. I cannot therefore conclude this section, without bearing my testimony, that the effectual establishment of this House, productive of such extensive benefits not only to the Metropolis and its neighbourhood, but to the whole Kingdom, (by proving the practicability, and pointing out the manner
of

of carrying so complicated a plan into execution) is principally owing to Mr. BENJAMIN HOUGHTON, who has devoted his time to the service of this Corporation, for upwards of three years, to the interruption and detriment of his own extensive manufactures. And the advice of this respectable Citizen, has been of as eminent use in arranging the plan, as his zeal, perseverance, and intrepidity in the execution of it.

The same reasonings are applicable to similar establishments in the country.

IF it be objected, that some of the sturdy Beggars, calculated, in the last chapter, to have been forced to labour, are in fact retired into the country, to carry on their old trade of Begging; that objection, to my ap-

apprehension, is so far from bearing against the system of establishing Houses of Industry, that it operates in favour of it. It points out, that if the law had been universally executed, the good effect would have been uniform. And as it was certainly to prevent expence, that the sums required by the act were not presented in most of the counties in this kingdom, we are naturally led to inquire how far that idea was founded in true oeconomy; for to oeconomy our present attention is confined.

By the first act of parliament the Grand Juries of the several counties were required to levy by presentment, (the *established* mode of providing for County expences,) a sum not less than 200*l.* nor exceeding 400*l.* per annum. It is evident to any
one

one who knows the number of profitable acres in this kingdom, that if the highest of the two sums had been levied in every county, the whole would have amounted to about one farthing per profitable acre throughout the kingdom, at an average; but as the presentment probably would have been for the lowest sum, the burden would not have exceeded half a farthing per acre.— This annual sum, trifling as it seems, would have established an effective House of Correction for Vagabonds in each County, the first step towards an House of Industry; which probably would soon have been engrafted on it by voluntary contributions. This, however, the Gentlemen in general thought proper to decline, from an idea that the county charges were already too burdensome

densome, especially on the lower people ; but whoever compares the proportion which the cottager, with a holding (*suppose*) of four acres, would have been obliged to contribute towards this public expence (which at the highest calculation could not have exceeded one penny per year), with the sum, even formerly levied on him by vagrant Beggars, which must be increased by the additional number driven from the great cities, and those counties where this salutary law is carried into execution, will probably be inclined to think this as mistaken a measure of Oeconomy, as of Police. But to return to the House of Industry in Dublin.

The utility of the establishment being evinced both from reason and experience, the only doubt that can now arise, is on the mode of supporting

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porting it ; whether it should *entirely* rely on voluntary Contributions, or receive *some* aid from an established fund. I shall now enter into that great question, the only real source of opposition to an institution, founded so deeply in justice, humanity, and policy.

Voluntary contributions are not sufficiently certain and permanent, to be depended upon for the support of so great an establishment.

IT has been slightly hinted before, that the efforts of a bounty, excited by the pressure of an intolerable nuisance, will gradually grow languid, as the memory of the grievance shall wear away. He must have little acquaintance with human nature, and be totally void of experience in the execution of charitable schemes, to whom this truth shall

shall require a proof. But if facts were necessary, this very Charity, which appears to have been hitherto so nobly supported, would supply them. For the collections from house to house have gradually declined; and what is a remarkable proof of what I now advance, the first, made whilst the plan was untried, and by the Generality of the inhabitants of this city thought impracticable, amounted to 2900*l*. the second, made when the Public was in a great measure relieved, and of course the efficacy of the scheme evinced (and during the sitting of Parliament too), amounted only to 2200*l*. and it is to be apprehended, that the third Collection, which is not yet completed, will fall very short, even of that sum. The reason is obvious; the nuisance, which was at first intolerable, has gradually dis-

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appeared.

appeared. The Corporation have been obliged, in order to keep the scheme on foot, to use for their current expences the large subscriptions, entitling the benefactors to be chosen governors for life; instead of putting them out to interest, and making them (what they were intended for) the basis of an annual income. Many of these benefactions were obtained too by the application of the active friends of the charity, seconded by the presence of the national grievance. But when the novelty ceases, neither can there be expected a perpetual succession of solicitors equally strenuous, nor can the same evidence hereafter appear of the necessity of a contribution. I am tired of proving points so clear, and shall only add, that the failure of one collection would instantly destroy the establishment, which, on
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the 25th of March last, had only a Fund sufficient to support it for three months, and a revenue of 458 l. 9 s. by annual subscriptions.

Voluntary contributions if they should form a certain, would still be an inequitable and improper fund.

TO support this proposition I shall assume, that common Begging is a Grievance to every individual, and pernicious to the Public. If that be granted; which is self-evident, can it be equitable to leave on the generous and benevolent, the burden of freeing his avaricious and hard-hearted neighbour from that common Grievance? Or can it be equitable to the Public, to permit the Grievance to be perpetual, because the most undeserving members of society do not like to contribute in a reasonable proportion to remove it?

Would

Would a wise government proceed in a like manner with regard to any other Nuisance? Where the advantage is to be shared by All, it is the clear dictate of equity and reason, that the expence and trouble of procuring it should be borne by All, in proportion to their ability.

But on other accounts it would be improper. The charity of the benevolent should be considered as a reserve for the relief of such cases, as general regulations cannot comprize. If this resource be exhausted in relieving ordinary distresses (for which the wisdom of the legislature could have provided by a fund drawn from the common wealth of its subjects, on the reasonable and just principle of making all the Rich contribute in a fair proportion to the relief of all the Poor), what fund remains for the numerous occasional misfortunes,
which

which no human wisdom can foresee? The unfeeling are never inclined, the benevolent are no longer able, to relieve them.

The causes of the immense expence incurred in England from the Poor Laws ; and the difference of the system adopted in this kingdom.

I am well aware, that the intolerable burden of the Poor Tax in England, has created so general an alarm in this kingdom, that many will turn away with impatience and disdain from reasonings advanced to prove, that a national establishment is the cheapest mode of supporting the Poor ; whilst those of more virtue and reflection, whose understandings are convinced, are yet deterred from risking on speculative probability (however strong), supported by only a single fact, a trial, which
 2 they

they think the experience of another kingdom has fully evinced to be so fatal. Now, in order to take off these popular apprehensions, it may be sufficient to apprize the Public, that whenever it shall be found necessary to apply to the Legislature for their aid, the utmost wish of the Corporation is to procure an appropriation of some small Tax, to be levied from those who are immediately benefited by the establishment, in the very mode which has received the *repeated sanction* of Parliament, for the support of a Public Work-house in this City (though the money raised from it has been since applied to *another* charity); sufficient to give some degree of stability to it, and yet leaving an opening for voluntary contributions; granted only from session to session (as it is to be hoped that charitable bequests to the

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corporation may in time diminish, if not totally take away the necessity of any tax) grounded on a calculation of the numbers actually maintained in the House, during the two former years, and on that principle to be regularly accounted for to Parliament. But in respect to the English System, I think it can be made manifest, to such as are willing to find the truth, that the expence of it must be attributed to two regulations, neither of which has taken place, as indeed I can assert with authority, they were from that very apprehension studiously avoided, in the two laws enacted for the relief and regulation of the Poor in this kingdom. These are, vesting in the Poor a *legal right* to relief; and confining the right of settlement to so narrow a district as a *single* parish. The former gives occasion to many

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applications founded on false allegations, and of course in some instances to imposition, as well as to legal processes; the latter to vexatious disputes about settlements, and to expensive removals, whilst the parishes are at perpetual war with each other; at the same time that it necessarily devolves the distribution of the public money on persons by no means fitted for such a trust by education or fortune; and renders it impossible to form, on so small a scale, any plan for employment, discipline, œconomy, or effectual checks on imposture. I could engage to trace almost all the evils arising from the English Poor Laws, to this latter source, and proposed to have treated this subject more at large; but that *my* testimony would be superfluous at a time, when a Committee of the English House of

Com-

Commons, after a mature revision of the Poor Laws, have come to the following resolutions:

“ That it is the opinion of this
 “ Committee, that the present method of regulating the Poor in separate parishes and townships, is
 “ in general ineffectual for their
 “ proper relief and employment.

“ That it is the opinion of this
 “ Committee, that if the disputes
 “ about settlements and removals of
 “ the Poor between one parish or
 “ place, and another in the same
 “ county, could be prevented, the
 “ great expence attending such litigation would be saved, the Poor
 “ would have an easier access to
 “ places where they might find employment, and would avoid the
 “ severe and cruel treatment which
 “ they frequently receive from the

“ contending parishes during such
 “ contest.

“ That it is the opinion of this
 “ Committee, that if the Poor were
 “ to be maintained and employed at
 “ one general county expence, those
 “ disputes would in a great measure
 “ be avoided, the spirit and inten-
 “ tion of the Statute made in the
 “ 43d year of Queen Elizabeth
 “ would be promoted, and the re-
 “ gulations and provisions therein
 “ contained, better enforced.

“ That it is the opinion of this
 “ Committee, that the establishing
 “ proper houses and buildings, at
 “ such places in each county as shall
 “ be best situated for the reception,
 “ accommodation, and employment
 “ of the several Poor and disorderly
 “ persons, proper to be sent thither,
 “ and for the convenience of their
 “ being duly inspected and attended

“ to, will be the most easy and effectual method for relieving the impotent, and employing the able Poor.”

Whoever compares these Resolutions, *in favour of a Distribution of the Poor by counties, and maintaining them in Houses of Industry*, with the Act for the relief of the Poor, in Ireland, must observe that they accede to the ideas of the Legislature of this kingdom. The Committee at the same time most wisely and justly preserved the *legal right* of the Poor, and I am convinced might, with great advantage, leave it open not only to the native, but to every stranger resorting thither, to avail himself of a House of Industry, where temperance, labour, and confinement would hold forth no temptation to an idle, debauched Vagabond.

As

As to the ideal danger of excluding the exercise and extinguishing the virtue of charity, they must be strangers indeed to the distresses of the Poor, in this and every other country, who apprehend a want of opportunities to exercise it, tho' the Legislature should have interfered with the utmost liberality; but it is almost ridiculous to observe, with what solicitude certain writers speak of the cultivation of this virtue, at the very time that they are labouring to sap the foundation of almost every charitable institution, and especially of a legal Establishment, the most effectual and judicious provision for the Poor. This objection is urged with particular earnestness by Lord KAIMS, in a recent publication*; and will be more fully

* Vide Sketches of the History of Man, by Lord Kaims.

considered in the following Examination of his principles relative to the Poor.

Before I enter on this subject, I cannot avoid expressing my regret, at the necessity which a cause so interesting to the rights and happiness of human nature lays me under, to point out various mistakes and inconsistencies in a writer, who bears no inconsiderable rank in the learned world. But as that very eminence adds danger to his authority, a free discussion of his principles becomes more necessary, and is certainly authorized by his own example—by the little reserve with which he impeaches the manners, and legislative wisdom of an illustrious nation. If any sentiment however should unawares fall from my pen, inconsistent with that moderation and civility which should ever attend the controversies of men
of

of education, or unbecoming the respect due to Lord KAIMS's character, I now bespeak his and the reader's candour; and flatter myself, that after a previous declaration of my abhorrence of that personality with which contention of this kind is often disgraced, any unguarded expression will be imputed only to a zeal in the cause of the distressed, and a conviction of the fatal consequences of the opinions disseminated by this ingenious and learned author.

The two principal objects of the Chapter I am now considering are, to point out the absurdity of the English *Poor Law*; and to prove the moral and political impropriety of any permanent interference of the legislature in favour of the Poor, a demonstration of which would indeed be absolutely necessary to justify

tify the author in " *declaring resolutely*
*" against any perpetual tax for the Poor *."*

I do not mean by this, that he adheres uniformly to these principles, but that they are his general premises, and the latter indispensably necessary to his conclusion. But unless I have unfortunately misapprehended (for I am conscious that I have endeavoured fairly, and advantageously to represent) his meaning, he is in each of these points not more remote from sound Morality and Policy, than inconsistent with Himself.

His objections to the English Poor Laws are derived from considerations, partly of police, partly of morality, " that they depopulate the " country and raise the price of Labour, are miserably defective in

* The Clauses included within double Commas are Lord Kaims's own Words.

" preventing mal-administration ;
 " oppressive, and unjust ; subversive
 " of industry, parental and filial affec-
 " tion, and charity." The reader will
 observe that I have changed the or-
 der in which the author places these
 objections, but I believe he will not
 accuse me of having diminished
 their force by arranging them in this
 method, which at the same time
 renders them susceptible of a more
 clear and concise answer. Having
 now presented them to the reader in
 their united force, I shall proceed
 to examine them separately.

That a parochial settlement tends
 to the destruction of cottages, as
 well as to prevent the free access
 of the labourer to his employment,
 I have been fully persuaded, from
 the first moment that I took the
 English Poor Laws into considera-
 tion, with a view of sketching out
 some

some plan for the regulation of the wretched Poor of this kingdom. But whether, on the whole, it diminishes the number of people, can only be determined by balancing this loss with the gain from a proper care of the sick, aged, and infant Poor, which, it is evident (and I have elsewhere proved), must certainly contribute to preserve lives, and yet has been totally omitted by this Author together with every other political consideration, favourable to the English system. I grant however, that there is some weight in the objection, but it will probably soon be taken off by the wise change, projected by the committee of the House of Commons, from a *parochial* to a *county* distribution. These two circumstances of confining the settlement to too small a district, and making no provision for the

stranger, are, to my apprehension, the sources of these and every other of the imperfections attending that great and benevolent system. But why do I call it benevolent? when this author contends that it is "oppressive and unjust,"—oppressive, because "the overseers with the approbation of two magistrates can assess the Tax,"—and unjust, because the "industrious poor Man is charged with the maintenance of the idle."

With regard to the first, he seems to forget that the overseer is checked as to the general sum, by being obliged to contribute in a due proportion to his property, fixed by long usage, and not to be changed inequitably by an annual officer without creating great alarm. He omits to mention the legal provisions against clandestine proceedings

ings, (by the 17 G. II.) * and without the shadow of a proof roundly asserts, that the appeal appointed to the general sessions would be either nugatory or pernicious, because the magistrates would either decline the trouble of an enquiry, or if they did enquire, would only increase the evil by an unjust decision in favour of the rich. To such large assertions I can only answer, that they were never applied with less propriety, than to the administration of justice in England †.

But

* To prevent Justices from giving an improper order in favour of any pauper, it is enacted by the 9 G. 2. c. 7. that no justice shall order relief to any poor person, without oath made of the cause; and that such person had applied for and been refused relief; and until the Overseers had been summoned to shew cause, and such person to whom relief is ordered shall be entered in the parish-book, and the officers shall not bring to the account of the parish, any money given to any poor persons not registered.

† By 17 G. 2. c. 3. it is enacted, the Overseers shall give notice in the church of every Poor Rate allowed
by

But the English Poor Laws, "are
 " unjust, because the industrious are
 " loaded with the maintenance of
 " the idle." This he supports by
 many extraordinary allegations; "in
 " England," says he, "every man
 " has a right to be idle, and every
 " idler has a maintenance; he
 " can secure bread for himself and
 " children whenever he takes a dis-
 " like to work; when he does not
 " like the wages, he can abandon
 " the work altogether, and put him-
 " self on the Parish." Now if a
 Parish maintenance were so much at
 his command, how could the def-
 cription of the miseries of the Poor
 in London by Mr. FIELDING and
 the author of ANGELONI'S LETTERS,

by the Justice, the next Sunday after such allowance;
 and no Rate shall be allowed sufficient, so as to col-
 lect the same, unless such notice have been given.
 And they shall permit every inhabitant to inspect the
 same and take copies, &c.

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(on which he builds so much of his argument) be true? How can he account for what he asserts so boldly, (tho' without being justified by fact,) that "England *in particular* abounds "with Beggars?" but let the reader judge, whether the law obliges, or even authorizes the overseers to relieve an idler. By the acts of Elizabeth, they are enjoined to set to work even the real Poor according to their strength. The vagrant is forbid by Law to beg, he is liable to whipping, to imprisonment in an house of correction, or in the common jail; he is entitled, or rather condemned, to the maintenance of a felon.

If the industrious man contributes to the relief of the distressed, he is only adding to a fund, of which he and his helpless family may avail themselves in the day of ad-

adversity. It is his interest, it is an indirect saving for his own benefit. When he contributes towards the suppression of vagabonds, he is relieving himself, as well as the public, from a nuisance so great, that Lord KA1MS himself plans a remedy for it at the public expence.

In proof that it is miserably defective in preventing mal-administration, he asserts, "that great sums are
 " levied beyond what the Poor receive ; it requires brigueing to be
 " chosen a Church Warden ; the
 " nomination, in London especially,
 " gives him credit at once." In a very few large Parishes in London, this may perhaps be true. It may be an object to a common Tradesman to have the expenditure, and of course a temporary use, of the great sums assessed for the Poor ; and where so many hands are employed

ployed in the Administration of so immense a revenue, perhaps no arrangement could prevent the intrusion of some abuse. But this writer should in candour have mentioned the checks of such abuse by the * 17 of G. 2. And if he had made proper inquiries, he would have found that the office of Church Warden is almost universally esteemed a *burdensome* employment.

“ But the English *Poor Laws* are
 “ productive of evils still more deplorable,
 “ for they are subversive to *Industry*

* By the 17 G. 2. c. 38. it is enacted, that the overseers shall yearly, within 14 days after new ones shall be appointed, deliver to their successors, a true account to be entered in a book, and signed by them, of all sums by them received, or rated and assessed, and not received ; and of all materials in their hands, or in the hands of any of the Poor to be wrought ; and of all sums paid by them, and of all things concerning their office ; and the same to be verified upon oath before a Justice ; and shall deliver over the money and materials in their hands, on pain of being committed to goal by two Justices, till they shall make such account and delivery.

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“ and *Morality*.” That the parochial settlement is often a check on the free resort of labourers to their employment, has been allowed: so far it is certainly injurious to industry. But if that loss were fairly balanced by the additional labour procured by discountenancing Begging, driving the sturdy vagrant to work, furnishing suitable employment to the partly disabled, and training up children in habits of industry, the scale would turn on the side of the English system, though in this point imperfect. But even with respect to this, Lord KAIMS asserts, what is to me perfectly new, “ that a labourer in England is afraid “ to quit the parish where he has “ gained a settlement, for fear of being cut out of a settlement altogether.” I have ever understood, that no man could lose his first settlement but by gaining a new one; and that
remo-

removals with their train of expence and inconvenience were grounded on that idea. But is it true, that expectation of relief in case of inability tends to destroy a spirit of Industry? Is it a Fact, that mankind are idle and profligate in consequence of a regular plan? If it produces that effect in some, may not a certainty of support for a numerous family, be to others an encouragement to marriage? And is not that regular settlement in life best calculated to preserve sobriety, industry, and decency of manners? However, as these reasonings are in some degree conjectural, we shall form a better determination, by examining how far Fact quadrates with either supposition. Are the common people less industrious in those nations, who provide best for the Poor; as France, Scotland, Berne in Switzerland,

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land, Holland, and England? Are not the inhabitants of these countries distinguished by a spirit of Industry? I fancy Lord KAIMS would be puzzled to name any country, in which a general spirit of Industry prevails, where the Poor are left (as he recommends) "to shift for themselves," that is, to beg or steal, for they neither will nor should starve.

Those nations only "where government is a science," (as he expresses it) who understand police, who have felt the value of Industry, and who know that the number of hands usefully employed, constitutes the riches of a nation, give attention to the regulation of the Poor. Political prudence induces them not to suffer any proportion of the labour of an Individual to be lost to his country, whilst that humanity, which

which ever follows civilization, and that affluence which results from Industry, incline and enable them to relieve distress.

How he could be led to think that the law sapped the foundations of *parental and filial affection*, I cannot conceive. He asserts indeed “that
 “ the parent is relieved of an anxiety
 “ for his children, and that they are
 “ independent on him, by means of
 “ the tax for the Poor—that it is
 “ common to see men in good business in London neglect their aged
 “ and diseased parents, for no other
 “ reason than the parish is bound
 “ to find them bread—and therefore
 “ it was *necessary* that Lord HILLSBOROUGH
 “ should insert in his plan
 “ a clause, obliging the parents and
 “ children of poor persons to maintain them.”

Would

Would not any one imagine from these assertions, that the law had not provided for these cases. If it had not indeed, one should naturally have imputed the omission to the very idea which Lord KAIMS suggests, that the feelings of nature rendered such precaution unnecessary ; yet the very statutes he quotes have expressly regulated this matter : 39 ELIZABETH obliges (under a penalty of 20s. per month) that the parents and children of any poor person not able to work, should maintain him, and the 43 of ELIZABETH extends this injunction to the grandfather, and grandmother, and children. But says he " the constant anxiety of a " labouring man to provide for his " children, endears them to him." If that idea be extended to cases of extreme distress, which are the only objects of the law, this opinion seems

seems to be at most doubtful. It is at least not intuitively clear, and should have been proved, before it was applied in order to prejudice a legal arrangement of such importance. But in truth it affects not the wisdom of the legislature of England, who expressly oblige a parent to maintain his children as long as he is able, and when he is not, I believe it would be difficult to prove that he would love them the better, for being forced to the miserable alternative of starving them or himself.

“ But the immoral effects of public charity spread still wider, it fails not to extinguish the virtue of charity among the rich, who never think of giving charity, when the public undertakes for all — from the extinction of charity, selfishness will become the ruling passion

" passion—in fact, the tax for the
 " Poor, has contributed greatly to
 " the growth of that groveling
 " passion, so conspicuous at present
 " in England. English authors,
 " who turn their thoughts to the
 " Poor, complain of decaying cha-
 " rity." It is, (has indeed been
 ever) the querulous cry of writers
 of more zeal than benevolence or
 judgment, that *the former times were*
better than these. This age, like others,
 has, in England, its characteristic
 vices, of which the principal, and
 probably the source, is a prevailing
 contempt of Revealed Religion. It
 has its virtues too, for I will venture
 to assert, that it is an age of alms-
 giving, and to quote for the assertion
 the authority of Lord KAIMS in this
 very chapter. " Travellers complain,
 " says he, of being infested with
 " an endless number of Beggars in
 " every

"every English town." How could they be maintained, if the virtue of charity was extinct? How are the various Hospitals, (which he arraigns so much) for Common Prostitutes, the Inoculatory and Lying-in-Hospitals, the County Infirmaries, and the Marine Society, which he so much extols, all of very recent institution, supported? By the *voluntary subscriptions* of a nation, in which he is pleased to assert "*the rich never think of giving charity?*" Or by what he elsewhere mentions as a kind of weakness; "an overflow of charity in the good people in England."

That he is not more consistent with himself in the general idea, than in the facts relative to England, is plain from what he asserts in a subsequent paragraph, that, "notwithstanding the obstruction of municipal law, seldom is there found

“ any one so obdurate as to resist the
 “ impulse of compassion, when a
 “ proper object is presented.” How
 is this to be reconciled with the alle-
 gation, that public charity “ fails
 “ not to extinguish the virtue of cha-
 “ rity amongst the rich, who never
 “ think of giving charity, when the
 “ public undertakes for all ?”

On the whole, though he blames
 the English compulsory system, he
 allows “ that it might be necessary,
 “ when enacted, to preserve the poor
 “ from starving, and that every mea-
 “ sure for promoting voluntary cha-
 “ rity, was first tried before the fatal
 “ blow was struck—that it may be
 “ taken for granted,” why, he does not
 tell us, (and there are strong facts be-
 fore our eyes, which favour the con-
 trary opinion) “ that charity is in
 “ England not more vigorous at pre-
 “ sent than it was in the days of Eli-

“ zabeth—of course he does not wish
 “ to abolish at once the legal provi-
 “ sion,” but to sap the foundation of
 it by degrees, by the following ex-
 pedient to revive the spirit of charity,
 “ extinguished,” in England, as he
 says, (how justly has been already
 shewn) “ by the legal provision.”
 This expedient would in truth not
 have been worth bringing to an ex-
 amination, but to evince how ill qua-
 lified this gentleman is, whatever the
 extent of his abilities may be in
 other matters, to guide the proceed-
 ings of a legislature in this depart-
 ment. He proposes that “ half the
 “ provision should be raised by a tax
 “ —and half left to voluntary sub-
 “ scription—and that the public
 “ fund should lye dead, till the sub-
 “ scription be completed—and that
 “ both should be first examined by
 “ the justices of peace” (of whose
 K 2 equity

equity and humanity he has before given so advantageous an idea) “ at
 “ a quarterly meeting—who must
 “ receive satisfaction before the Poor
 “ are to be relieved.” Sensible that
 charity is now extinct in England,
 he does by no means recommend
 that the legislature should at once
abolish the legal provision, but merely
suspend it (that is a supply of lodging,
 cloaths, medicine, and food, to all
 the Poor) for a few months. This
 expedient would certainly supercede
 the trial of every other for the pre-
 sent set of Poor; as it is to be pre-
 sumed none of them could fast till
 the determination of the justices at
 their quarterly meeting, and by his
 supposition they have no resource at
 present in the charity of the English
 nation. The reasons on which he
 grounds his full persuasion that the
 subscription will be completed rea-
 dily,

dily, are worth attending to, in order to shew how maturely and solicitously the writer has attended to the care of the Poor. "As the public fund lies dead till the subscription is completed, it is not to be imagined, that *any Gentleman* will stand out, it will be a public imputation on his character ; far from apprehending any deficiency, confident I am that *every Gentleman* would consider it as honourable to contribute largely." These indeed are civil forms of expression, of little meaning, which politeness sometimes leads men to use in common conversation. But is it on such reasonings that a legislature, animated by a parental solicitude for the most helpless class of its subjects, would ground its regulations ? These lines would furnish a pleasant preamble to an act abolishing one half of

of the provision for the Poor : that is in effect the whole, unless the pauper could subsist on one half of the food necessary to support life. I will venture, on the strength of some experience in charitable collections, to prophecy (what indeed a common knowledge of mankind will enable any one to foretel) that in this subscription the benevolent would give beyond a reasonable proportion to their ability; the sordid would give little, or probably nothing; the vain would subscribe at first, but soon tire, and throw the whole burden on the benevolent; and they can easily quote from this chapter some maxims, to justify their conduct to the superficial.

From these objections, levelled immediately at the imperfections of the particular system adopted in England, most of which are applicable
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by inference and implication to every legal establishment for the Poor, he proceeds directly to prove that it is " impracticable to make *any* legal " establishment that is not fraught " with corruption." I flatter myself, that in my Argument for the Poor, I have established their absolute right to a national provision on the footing of justice; but as Lord KAISMS alledges, that he can support his assertion by reasons no less obvious than solid, they are worth the trouble of examination. In a legal establishment for the Poor, " no distinction can be made between virtue " and vice, and consequently every " such establishment must be a premium for Idleness. The execution " of the Poor Laws would indeed be " impracticable, were such a distinction attempted: where are " judges to be found, who will patiently

“ tiently follow out such an intricate
 “ expiscation ? ” Is it possible to at-
 tend to this consideration a moment,
 without discerning, that it makes
 directly against his conclusion ? If
 the discrimination be so difficult,
 when regular officers are appointed
 for that purpose, must it not be to-
 tally impossible for a private man
 to make it, when he is solicited for
 occasional alms, perhaps in the pub-
 lic streets ? Begging, therefore, (in
 whatever mode it is carried on) by
 an infinitely greater uncertainty of
 the merits of the object, holds forth
 an infinitely greater premium for
 idleness. Nor is this inquiry by
public officers so entirely to be despair-
 ed of, as I have seen and assisted in
 examining certificates, for near one
 thousand Paupers in the City of Dub-
 lin, specifying that distinction, in
 obedience

obedience to the law for badging the Poor.

“ But where, says he, is the necessity of any public establishment? Providence has scattered benevolence amongst the Sons of men with a liberal hand. In a well regulated government, promoting industry and virtue, the persons who need charity are not many, and such persons may with assurance depend on the charity of their neighbour. Indigent virtue can never fail of relief:” yet he has before told us, that in the year 1656, an æra, in which France was arrived at no inconsiderable degree of improvement, “ precarious charity had proved so ineffectual in Paris,” that it was found necessary to establish Hospitals “ with certain funds,” for the relief of the poor; and that the example of Paris was followed

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“ by every great town in the kingdom :” that in England, in the reign of ELIZABETH, the first compulsory law “ was *necessary* to keep “ the Poor from starving :” that the edict of the states of Holland, enacting that the Magistrates should levy a tax, when voluntary contributions were insufficient, “ was *sensible* ;” which by his principles he must rather be led to think not only superfluous, but *subversive of industry and morality*.

It would require a long series of arguments, to detect all the errors in these few lines ; but not to trespass too much on the reader's patience, a few lines may be sufficient to shew how unworthy Lord KAIMS's ideas on this subject are of his general literary character. For how are the distresses of the Poor to be known? He declares, that “ common Begging “ ought absolutely to be prohibited,
“ at

“ at the hazard of losing some lives
 “ —that no plan can be formed for
 “ inquiring into the truth of their
 “ distress; for to accomplish that
 “ task, a man must abandon every
 “ other concern.” —He supposes a
 “ well regulated government, pro-
 “ moting industry,” yet he declares
 equally against a legal establishment
 in *all* countries, whether the go-
 vernment be well or ill regulated,
 whether it be calculated to encour-
 age or extinguish industry.—“ Provi-
 “ dence, says he, has scattered bene-
 “ volence amongst the sons of men
 “ with a liberal hand.” This is
 true, but does not vice impair, and
 often extinguish this amiable virtue?
 Does not even accident defeat its ope-
 ration? Are not some at a distance,
 perhaps in foreign countries? Are
 these fully attentive to that poverty
 which is aggravated by their ab-

fence? Are not many carelefs, hard-hearted, fordid, or prodigal? Let the writer make thefe allowances, and place himfelf in the fituation of an induftrious poor man, ftruck by ficknefs, furrounded by a helpless and numerous family, and forbid even to relate his diftreffes in public, and I doubt whether he would with fuch “affurance depend on the charity of his neighbours;” but if he could, by what rule of equity fhould the whole burden be thrown on the confiderate and benevolent? Why fhould a defect in the laws of a country indirectly curtail the moft valuable of its fubjects of a reasonable proportion of the accommodation of their fortunes, and extend as it were a public reward to an unfeeling difpofition? Is not a premium for hard-heartednefs full as excep-

exceptionable as a premium for idleness?

“ But it may be boldly affirmed
 “ that those who need charity would
 “ be more comfortably provided for
 “ by the Plan of Providence than by
 “ a legal establishment.” Here he
 takes it for granted, that a legal establishment is not *the Plan of Providence*. If it be not, I shall readily give it up. For I perfectly agree with the learned author, that “ men make a confused jumble, when they attempt
 “ to mend the Laws of Nature.” The Laws of Nature and the Plans of Providence, are known by their benevolence and wisdom. By these standards let us compare the two systems, of providing for the Poor by law, or “ leaving them to shift
 “ for themselves,” under this restriction too, that “ common Begging is
 “ absolutely to be prohibited, even at
 “ the

“ the risk of losing lives by neglect
 “ or oversight.”—In one case, you
 leave the child of affliction either
 shut up in a wretched lodging, or
 exposed to the severity of the weather,
 under the pressure of years, hunger,
 cold, nakedness, disease, and perhaps
 an helpless family, restrained, by the
oppression of law, from giving vent to
 his grief, and relating to the passen-
 ger the particulars of his misery, with
 no other chance for relief than this,
 “ that his squalid poverty will excite
 “ a degree of pity proportioned to the
 “ distress.” You give an unbounded
 licence to the profligate to quit every
 useful employment, and, by success-
 fully counterfeiting that *squalid poverty*,
 to intercept the relief intended for it.
 You abandon the tender infant to an
 untimely death, or, to what is infi-
 nitely worse, to immoral habits—a
 fated victim to dishonesty, and, if a
 female,

female, to prostitution. In the other you appoint regular guardians of the orphan and afflicted, to whom the distressed have a right to appeal; who are instructed to remove them from the mansions of sorrow, to a comfortable asylum, provided with every necessary, whether for health or sickness, for the body or the mind, at the common expence of all, whom the Laws of Society have invested with a more ample portion of the public wealth. Is the law of nature to be found in chance or in reason, in confusion or in order? Is the plan of Providence to be traced in cruelty, idleness, misery, and vice, or in benevolence, industry, happiness, and virtue? The law of nature is the law of reason: every benevolent exertion of which is part of the great *Plan of Providence.*

Having

Having seen what he disapproves of, let us now advert to what he recommends. "I heartily approve every regulation that tends to prevent idleness—common Begging ought absolutely to be prohibited, even at the hazard of losing a few lives—an officer must be appointed in every parish, with a competent salary for apprehending and carrying to the Work-house every strolling Beggar," — where they are all to be fed on bread and water for a year, with liberty to work for themselves." This mixed multitude must include the real Poor as well as the Impostor. Here is palpably a legal establishment; an house, a maintenance (though a scanty one), officers in and out of the house provided at the public expence. It is open to all, they need only Beg, to be admissible; but those
 who

who cannot work must be *confined to their wretched appointment of bread and water*, whilst the sturdy Vagabond adds to it the full produce of his labour. The only difference then between Lord KAIMS's and other plans for a Work-house, is, that he allots a much better maintenance to the Impostor than the real Poor, or indeed than the industrious labourer, for he gives him the entire profits of his work, besides the accommodation and allowance of the house. In this plan he contradicts too his former ideas; for with respect to those who were reduced by their profligacy, he had before suggested a curious mode of discrimination, to "shut up those who are able to work in an house of correction," to leave the helpless at large. "If," says he, "by overfight or neglect any happen to die of want, the example will tend

M

" more

“ more to reformation, than the most
 “ pathetic discourse from the pulpit.”

Now if we suppose one of them
 (for the credit of the police of the
 country, and for the more general
 edification) to perish in the public
 streets, would it be perfectly clear,
 from the appearance of the corpse,
 whether he fell a victim to his own
 profligacy, and public prudence, or
 to the mere savage insensibility of his
 neighbours? But let us, as he pro-
 perly says of the embezzlement of
 money belonging to the Poor, “ turn
 “ our eyes from a scene so horrid !”

He then speaks with some degree
 of favour of the scheme, established
 in Scotland, of empowering the
 landholders to assess the parishioners ;
 and recommends an improvement
 of it for great cities, by appointing
 and empowering “ a committee to
 “ apply through the Parish for cha-

“ ritable subscriptions, and if any
 “ obstinately refuse to contribute, to
 “ tax them at *their discretion*.” Here
 is a parochial tax, one of the most
 exceptionable of all arrangements, as
 has been before shewn, with these
 additional grievances, that no mode
 is established of judging whether
 the contribution be proportioned to
 the ability of the subscriber, nor any
 appeal for redress provided, if the
 Committee should abuse a *discretionary*
 power, so far surpassing *any* authority
 vested in the *English parish officer*, on
 the Oppression of which he has de-
 claimed so much.

From his ideas of a legal establish-
 ment, let us proceed to his observa-
 tions on particular charitable institu-
 tions for the Poor.

He condemns work-houses as use-
 less, yet he directs “ all Beggars to
 “ be carried to one.”

He commends " an Hospital for
 " the sick, wounded and maimed, as
 " being productive of good without
 " doing any harm ; such an Hospi-
 " tal should depend *partly* on volun-
 " tary charity." Of course he al-
 lows it should arise *partly* from a
 compulsory tax. Yet he praises the
 man who sold the Poor-House in the
 French village, which I suppose did
 not exclude the sick, wounded, and
 maimed, and " gave to the Poor a
 " moderate proportion of bread and
 " beef ;" for the following extraor-
 dinary reason, " the Poor and Sick
 " were more comfortably lodged at
 " home, than formerly in the house,
 " and by that plan of management
 " the parish Poor decreased." No-
 thing is more likely. He turned
 into the streets the sick and helpless
 who *had no home*, and gave nothing but
 food, to those who wanted lodging,
 raiment,

raiment, and medicine. I dare say *the parish Poor decreased* almost as fast as the man, who so *prudently* sold the House, which sheltered them from the weather, could have wished.

I am sorry to point out further inaccuracies in the few facts, on which he builds his benevolent system of stripping the English Poor of the comfort purchased with three millions of money. "In Bristol, says he, "the Parish Poor twenty years ago did not exceed four thousand, at present they amount to more than ten thousand." With that city I am well acquainted. It has not 9000 houses, its burials amount not to 1700 in a year; and of course the whole number of inhabitants cannot be calculated at more than 50,000. If this writer's assertion were true, more than one fifth of the inhabitants must receive the

the parish pay ; and the comfort he draws from this *extraordinary* fact is, that the whole number (*sick, wounded, and maimed* amongst the rest) will soon "be left to their shifts." I suspect that he has mistaken the proportion of expence, for the proportion of the numbers of persons supported, as the sum levied in that city for the Poor, has really increased (nearly in the period he mentions) from 4000 to 10,000*l.* and upwards. But from whatever cause the mistake may have arisen, it is a sufficient specimen to caution the Reader not to rely implicitly on the facts advanced by this Gentleman.

To houses for receiving and training to labour orphans and begging children, he objects, "because Children require the affection of a mother." Granted. But suppose they have no mother ; suppose the mother
has

has abandoned them, or leads them about to beg; these cases he thinks not worth providing for. Suppose she has half a dozen young children, and is a widow: "In that and such cases," says he, "would it not be better to distribute small sums from time to time amongst poor families overburdened with children? and with respect to orphans and begging children, it would be a more salutary measure to encourage mechanics, manufacturers, and farmers above all, to educate such children, with a premium for each, the half in hand, and the other half when they can work for themselves." These ideas may be very proper, but where is the fund, when every legal establishment is abolished?

His objections to a Foundling Hospital, may be perhaps of some weight in England, where there is another provision

provision for poor deserted children, but are by no means solid, in the general manner he applies them to countries, which have no other resource.

He arraigns every establishment in *London* for prostitutes, whether to cure their diseases, preserve their and their *innocent children's* lives, or even to reform their morals; yet he thinks Mr. STIRLING deserves to be kept in perpetual remembrance, for the scheme he contrived to reform common prostitutes in *Edinburgh*. It would take too much time to do justice to the wisdom and goodness of these institutions. I have on another occasion delivered my sentiments at large on an Asylum for penitent prostitutes*.

* In a Sermon preached before the Governesses and Guardians of the Magdalen Asylum, in Dublin, on the 1st of May, 1774, and published at their request.

Charity schools he finds fault with as fostering laziness. If they have no attention to industry, they are on a bad plan; the Charter Schools in *Ireland* train the children to labour. "Reading and writing fluently, says he, renders them too delicate for hard labour, and too proud for ordinary labour;" yet he praises the Orphans School at *Edinburgh*, where he says they are taught to read and write." As to the supposed advantage of being instructed in the principles of religion and morality in a Charity School, he holds that unnecessary; "the principles of Theology and Morality are stamped on the heart of man—the natural impressions are sufficient for good conduct." To omit the palpable inference, that Revelation is not the foundation of his Theology, (as indeed no part of this chapter breathes

the spirit of Christianity,) from whence does he draw his examples of the sufficiency of these natural impressions, unimproved by education? Do the Theology and Morality of the African or American Savage justify this assertion? It is true, as he observes, that " God hath placed labour as a guard to virtue;" but does that imply that " God hath not contrived another guard in religious instruction?" But such is the efficacy which he ascribes to labour, that " more integrity will be found among a number of industrious Poor taken at random, than among the same number in any class." Of this I pretend not to judge from my own knowledge, as I am not possessed of facts sufficient to balance the moral virtues of different classes of men; but I cannot help recollecting that a few pages before

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before Lord KAIMS speaks of a man in *this* class of life as “ a groveling creature, who has no sense of honour, and scarce any of shame.”

I should apologize for having entered into an examination of the principles of this writer, with a minuteness of attention, to which a judicious reader will not think them entitled. But the generality of mankind may be easily influenced by the authority of a name, less considerable than Lord KAIMS's, to embrace doctrines which coincide with their apparent Interest ; and popular opinion is of particular importance at a time when this great subject is agitated in the Parliament of *Great Britain*, and may soon engage the attention of the legislature of this kingdom. The question is of no ordinary magnitude: Whether education should be provided for the infant, medicine for

the sick, and a retreat for the aged, from a regular fund ; or whether they shall be abandoned to idleness, vice, disease, and famine? It involves the comfort, the existence, and the virtue of multitudes. It affects national wealth, happiness, and manners : it is deeply interesting to the commonwealth. On such a subject no man has a right to offer any thoughts, which are not the result of full enquiry, and most mature reflection ; but on the side of humanity it would be more pardonable to be precipitate, because it would be more amiable, and less dangerous to err. Lord KAIMS has engaged on the other side with a zeal approaching to acrimony :—He has rendered it the duty of every man who can detect his mistakes, to point them out to public observation. I therefore without reserve conclude ; and flatter my-

myself that the foregoing Remarks will justify the declaration, that his facts are misrepresented, or incompetent; that his reasonings are inconclusive and inconsistent; that his ideas of Morality and Theology are equally imperfect; and that his doctrines are no less subversive of public order and industry, than repugnant to humanity and justice.

F I N I S.

will justify the determination that his
facts are unimpeached or in-
correct; that his reasonings are in-
conclusive and inconsistent; that his
ideas of liberty and theology are
equally imperfect; and that his doc-
trines are no less defective or op-
posed to order and industry, than repug-
nant to humanity and justice.

It will precede
AN

A R G U M E N T

IN SUPPORT OF THE

RIGHT OF THE POOR

IN THE

KINGDOM OF IRELAND,

TO A

NATIONAL PROVISION;

IN THE APPENDIX TO WHICH,

An Attempt is made to settle a Measure of the Contribution due from each Man to the Poor, on the Footing of Justice.

By RICHARD WOODWARD, LL. D.

Dean of Clogher, and Chancellor of St. Patrick's, Dublin.

————— Oh ! I have ta'en
Too little care of this. Take physick, Pomp,
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou may'st shake the superflux to them,
And shew the heavens more just.

SHAKESPEARE'S LEAR.

A T C U M E N T

RIGHTS OF THE POOR

IN THE

NATIONAL DIVISION

OF THE

AT THE

OF THE

OF THE

TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
THOMAS CONOLLY.

S I R,

IF I were to address you in the ordinary style of dedications, I am convinced I should totally forfeit that share, which I flatter myself I possess, at present, of your esteem. It is as offensive to an ingenuous mind to receive, as to pay the adulation too often lavished on such occasions, beyond
O yond

ii DEDICATION.

yond the bounds of delicacy, or even decency: encomiums too extravagant to gain the confidence of the world; too indiscriminate to reflect any honour, even on a deserving object; and, of course, derogatory from the integrity, if not the genius, of their author. For there is a dignity in real esteem and friendship, which disdains the very garb of a parasite. However highly I prize your real worth, from a thorough knowledge of it, I am satisfied to leave your general character to be estimated by the particular regard and affection borne to you by all ranks of men; and shall content myself with giving the reason which induced me to dedicate to you this little production of my leisure hours.

DEDICATION. iii

The subject would naturally have turned the attention of any writer to you, who distinguished yourself by so laudable a solicitude, during the last session of parliament, to bring in heads of a bill, for the relief of the Poor: the burthen of which, if it lay on landed property, no individual in this kingdom would have supported in a larger proportion than yourself. But in addition to this *common* motive, I could not let slip so public an opportunity of expressing my private obligations to you, for your protection, as a patron; and even beyond that, for the confidence and intimacy with which you have so long honoured me, as a friend. It is owing solely to your recommendation, that I am placed in this kingdom, and I am persuaded that

iv DEDICATION.

you will ever regard it as the best
return I can make to yourself, to
devote to the benefit of your poor
countrymen, the little services in the
power of,

Dear Sir,

Your most obliged,

And faithful

Humble Servant,

RICHARD WOODWARD.

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE

R E A D E R.

TH E object of this pamphlet is to place in their true light the wants and the rights of the Poor in this kingdom. For this purpose, the author hath confined himself to one train of reasoning, which appears to him absolutely conclusive: without deviating into variety of proof, which might distract the attention; or into any kind of ornament, which (by engaging the imagination or passions) might seduce, or be suspected of seducing the judgment. As
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vi ADVERTISEMENT.

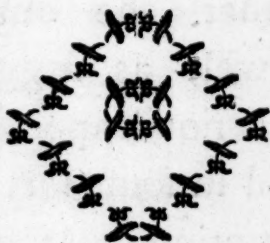
it is his ambition, for the sake of those whose cause he is pleading, to draw the attention of persons qualified by their station and talents to carry these speculations into execution, who seldom have leisure or relish for minute and tedious deductions; he hath limited himself to general reasonings, and to the utmost brevity compatible with clearness. From the candour of such readers he flatters himself, that if any of his opinions have the air of novelty, they will at least weigh before they reject: if the freedom of any of his sentiments should alarm, as tending to excite the murmurs of the Poor, that they will reflect whether he hath not at the same time inculcated the reasonableness of their subordination in society, and their obligations

ADVERTISEMENT. vii

tions to obedience; and whether he was not obliged to be thus explicit in stating their rights by the conduct of the Rich: if any expression found harsh or invidious, that they will consider, whether it could have been softened without betraying the truth: if it appear assuming, in a private man, to point out the duties of the Legislature of a great kingdom, that they will condescend to examine (before they condemn him), whether the duty be not proved as well as suggested, and whether it be not important enough to justify, and in some sort to require, that presumption. At all events, whatever judgment may be formed of the execution, the design of this little piece needs no apology. No sinister or interested view can be imputed to its author. Little is to be

viii ADVERTISEMENT.

be gained by maintaining the rights of the Poor, against the prejudices and supposed interest of the Rich, but the consciousness of a benevolent intention, and the heart-felt satisfaction of endeavouring to be a friend to the friendless.



A N

A R G U M E N T

IN SUPPORT OF THE

RIGHT OF THE POOR * IN THIS KING-
DOM TO A NATIONAL PROVISION.

I N T R O D U C T I O N.

THE want of a competent provi-
sion for our Poor must have
been ever regretted by the confederate,

* To prevent mistake, it is premised, that through-
out this Argument by the term Poor are meant not
those idle vagrants, who are a pest to society, but
those persons only, who, though willing to work,
cannot subsist by labour; and in the term Rich are
comprehended all who have more than enough to
supply them with the mere necessaries of life. See
the Appendix.

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from

from motives of policy as well as compassion. But such is the deference paid even to error long established, that few of those who discern this imperfection in our police, would dare to hazard a sentiment so new and alarming; regarded by almost all as a dangerous paradox, or at best a visionary and impracticable truth. So general a discouragement makes most of them give up the cause as desperate. It requires perhaps a more *uncommon* fortitude of mind to contend with civil, than with military difficulties—to oppose the prejudices, than to face the enemies of one's country: and yet, in both cases, it is equally the duty of a good citizen to stem the torrent with resolution, and, even in circumstances the most discouraging, *non desperare de Republicâ*. Indeed where both duty and expediency can be
plainly

plainly proved; in such a case, to despair of the wisdom and virtue of the Public, is certainly in some degree to derogate from our own. For we should reflect, that the steady light of truth will (by sure, however slow, degrees) break through the mist of ignorance and prejudice; and that whatsoever is consonant to the maxims of reason, as well as the feelings of humanity, (being proof against cavil, and superior to ridicule) can never be hopeless, especially in a free and enlightened country. Of this, the course of the last Parliament winter gave abundant proof, when the *Sketch* of a Plan * for a national provision for the Poor (an idea heretofore so generally exploded)

* Drawn up hastily by the Author, and submitted to a Committee of the Dublin Society, who were pleased to approve and adopt it; and for which he had the honour, much above the merit of the performance, of a gold medal.

was honoured with the approbation of the DUBLIN SOCIETY, and a laudable beginning of a public establishment for the Sick was made by the wisdom of the Legislature. At the same time, the zeal of many gentlemen, of distinguished rank and character, to extend the national bounty to the aged and infant Poor, though prevented from taking effect by the close of the Session, gave a further presage of the practicableness of any scheme recommended by its propriety and benevolence to the Parliament of *Ireland*. From these favourable appearances, the Author is encouraged to lay before the Public his thoughts on the expediency of such an establishment, which he is convinced (after much consideration) is as nearly capable of demonstration, as any moral or political question whatever. How far he may do

do justice to so good a cause, he submits with becoming deference to the public judgment ; and, in order to give the merits of the question a fair trial, will confine himself to a method strictly argumentative, resting his plea in favour of the Poor on the proof of these three positions :

That the Poor are so inadequately provided for by *voluntary* contributions in this kingdom, as to stand in *need* of some *legal* title to a maintenance.

That it is the *indispensible* duty of the Rich to grant them a competent provision : And,

That it is eminently for the *interest* of the *Commonwealth* that this duty be discharged in an ample and effectual manner.

If these three points admit of a clear proof, and there remains no doubt of the necessity, the moral obligation, or the political expediency
of

of providing a public support for the Poor; there is a reasonable ground of hope, that such narrow and forbid prejudices as will not yield to the voice of reason, or the united affections of compassion and public love, may be controlled by the wisdom and authority of Law.

P O S I T I O N I.

That the Poor are so inadequately provided for by voluntary contributions in this kingdom, as to stand in need of some Legal title to a maintenance.

THAT the lower class of our people are very ill accommodated with lodging, raiment, and even food, is but too manifest to all who are acquainted with their manner of living. That their Poverty is likely to continue, with but little mitigation, will

will be as evident to any intelligent man, who reflects on the following, among other causes of it: the exorbitant rent extorted from the poorer tenants, ever loth and afraid to quit their ancient habitations, by the general method of setting farms to the highest bidder, without any allowance for a Tenant Right; the system, as prejudicial to the landlord as to the under-tenant, of letting large tracts of land to Undertakers inured to tyranny and extortion; the oppression of Duty-work, which calls the cottager arbitrarily from the tillage of the little spot which he holds at so dear a rent; and the low rate of wages for labour. These circumstances, combined with some others, reduce the *Irish* cottager below the peasant of almost every country in Europe. Such is his hard condition in the most plentiful season, and in the

the prime of his health and strength: what then must be his state in time of dearth, under the pressure of years, infirmities, or even a very numerous young family? His expences admit of no retrenchment. He is a stranger to luxury, or even to decent accommodation, and yet his wages seldom afford any reserve. On the death of such a father of a family, dependent on his labour for their main, or perhaps entire, support, how forlorn must be the situation of his widow and orphan children! It would shock a tender mind to imagine (if imagination could paint) the miseries, to which the bulk of the inhabitants of this kingdom are constantly exposed by the slightest reverse of fortune: by a single bad season, by an accidental loss, by an occasional disease, and even by the gradual decay of nature. Nor are these

these affecting scenes confined to seasons of scarcity ; they must always exist in a great, though not equal, number. They present themselves but too often to every country Gentleman (and still more to the Clergy, in the exercise of their parochial duties, to whose experience we appeal), to need a proof. They cannot be doubted or denied by any, but those who shut their eyes or steel their hearts against them.

So numerous, so urgent, and so well known are the distresses of the Poor—Let us now fairly estimate the sufficiency of the resources at present subsisting for their relief. Our eyes will be naturally turned *first* to the Landed Gentlemen, who derive their wealth and importance from the labour of these men. Of these, many, perhaps a Majority of the most considerable, constantly reside in another

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king-

kingdom ; and though some of them may cast back a part of their superfluity on those, to whose industry they owe their *All*, yet it is to be feared, that such instances are comparatively very rare. On the contrary, it is too frequently urged as a recommendation of *Irish* property, that it is not *encumbered with any tax for the maintenance of the Poor*. A singular instance this of the inadvertence, (one would only hope of the inadvertence, lest we should be forced to impute it to the depravity) of mankind, that such a phrase could be rendered so familiar to the ear of any wise and good man, as to lose its genuine horror ! If the sentiment were developed, surely few would entertain, and still fewer avow it : and therefore, no ingenuous Reader will think it either invidious or unnecessary in this interesting argument to lay

lay open its plain import, which is this, " An estate in this kingdom is
 " represented to be peculiarly advan-
 " tageous to the Landlord, because,
 " though he may, and generally
 " does, avail himself of the utmost
 " profit that can be drawn from the
 " labour of his tenant," (leaving him
 in truth too scanty a *present* maintenance,) " he is nevertheless at liberty
 " to abandon that labourer to perish,
 " when he is unable to work any lon-
 " ger." Is this boasted privilege ei-
 ther honourable or desirable? A wise
 man would not glory in such an ex-
 emption, a good man would not
 claim it, and he who wishes to enjoy,
 doth not deserve it.

But it will be replied, that notwith-
 standing the absence of many great
 proprietors of land in *Ireland*, there
 is yet a large number of persons

of distinguished property, and a still greater of respectable Gentry, who reside on their estates, (a part of the year at least) administering employment to the industrious, and charity to the distressed. Granted! there are many such valuable characters amongst us, who are an ornament and blessing to their country. To such, every mark of public regard is due. We pay homage to their virtues with alacrity, we perceive and unveil their imperfections with regret. But it is the duty of an advocate for the Poor to ask even *them*, whether their bounty be not confined too much, if not entirely, to the neighbourhood of their own residence. Does their liberality extend equally to their distant estates? How few can truly say, that they ever have it in their contemplation what may be the condition of their lower tenants on

6

lands

lands remote from their own mansions ! Yet those tenants are unquestionably of equal service to them and the Public, equally entitled to their attention, and the more likely to stand in need of their charity, because from those estates they are *Absentees*, almost as fatally as if they resided in another kingdom. On the whole it cannot be denied, that by far the greater part of our lands do not enjoy the benefit of the proprietor's residence, and in general the Poor of those estates partake not of his charity. Now, when we have weighed on one side, the extraordinary indigence of the whole peasantry ; and allowed, on the other, for the number of Absentees from the kingdom, the remoteness of many estates from the mansions of the resident Gentry, (which together render it no uncommon case to find a tract

tract of country, containing some scores of square miles, without one family of note) it will be intuitively clear, that there can be no balance, nor indeed any, the least, proportion, between the necessities of the poor tenants, and the alms of their landlords.

To compensate for this inequality, let no one lay the smallest stress on the collections in the places of divine worship. For, however considerable they may be in some particular churches, fortunately circumstanced, the average of them through the kingdom is too trivial to be worth mentioning. In a word, however harsh and unpalatable it may be, it is but too notorious a truth, that the Poor in the country draw little of their support from the Gentry; the vagrant Beggar excepted, who is generally a disgrace to the name,

name, and an injury to the cause of Charity. They depend principally upon the neighbouring Farmer, or even Cottager, the poorest of whom are humane enough to communicate with them, and thereby lessen their little stock. Can there be a spectacle more edifying, and at the same time more reproachful, to an affluent Landlord, than to see (and it is his own neglect if he does not see or know it) one of his poor tenants feeding another, with bread taken as it were out of the mouth of his own children ; whilst he, who is feasting on the labour of both, attends to the miseries of neither ; but throws the whole burden of relieving them on those, whom no reasonable by-stander could think equal to bear the smallest part of it. . But to return to the argument, (if this observation be thought a digression) what can such wretches

wretches give? What can they, who are themselves so ill defended from cold and hunger, be supposed to spare to another for food, much less for clothing? As to education for the infant, or medicine for the sick Poor, such relief seemed to have never been thought of, till the latter were considered in a late Act for County Infirmaries, which does honour to the Legislature. Yet honourable as this beginning of good is to our Governors, it can be regarded only as a sample of what they approve—a kind of earnest of public benevolence. For it is clear at first sight, that the income of those Infirmaries is in no degree adequate to the number of sick Poor in a whole country; the orphan, the aged, and a vast majority of the sick, (who from distance of situation, or the extremity of their cases, cannot be removed; or from
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the contagiousness of their distempers, or want of room, cannot be admitted to the county hospital) are still without relief; and therefore no more is necessary to place out of the reach of cavil the first Position:

“ That the Poor are so inadequately
 “ provided for by *Voluntary* contribu-
 “ tions in this Kingdom, as to stand
 “ in need of some *Legal* title to a
 “ maintenance.”

P O S I T I O N II.

*That it is the indispensable duty of the
 Rich to provide a competent maintenance
 for the Poor.*

IT hath been so usual for the advocates for the Poor to content themselves with exciting the *compassion* of the Rich, that it will probably appear to many a paradox to assert,

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that

that they have a clear title to a subsistence from them on the footing of *strict justice*. Yet the reasonableness of this claim may be made so plain, to any man accustomed to consider the origin of society, and the foundation of property, (and for such readers this argument is principally intended), as to supersede the necessity of any other plea for a public provision for them. Nor would we so far wrong their just pretensions, as to represent that aid, which is really a debt, as an act of bounty to be granted or withheld at pleasure; or even (in the language of some writers on the Law of Nature) as a duty of *imperfect* obligation. We make our demand *absolutely*, and support it on the following principles.

Every friend to the common rights of mankind will readily admit, that no political system can be
wisely

wisely and equitably constructed, without giving such attention to the welfare of every class of its members, as will render their situation in that society preferable to what is called (in popular, though somewhat unphilosophical, language) a State of Nature. Now as every citizen (who hath not forfeited his right by civil guilt) hath this claim on the community to which he belongs, some writers on Natural Law have had recourse to the idea of a certain compact, as the origin of government; which, though it never fully took place, serveth well to illustrate the right inherent in every man to subsistence and protection, in return for his services to the Public, and submission to its laws. The idea is founded in equity: for every civil constitution should be so framed, that each member of it could have been supposed

to have acceded to it voluntarily, with a rational attention to his own happiness. On this supposition, as on a contract implied, is built the reciprocal obligation to protect and obey, and on the neglect of his relative duty, by either party, is built the right of the Sovereign * to take away the property or life of the subject, and the right of the subject to resist and annul the power of the Sovereign. But that this compact is to be regarded only as a kind of fiction, taken up to convey an idea of rights, is evident from this known fact ; that every man finds himself a subject of some state, without a power of emancipating himself from its jurisdiction, though he hath not

* The term *Sovereign* is here to be taken in its utmost latitude, as signifying the *ruling Power* in every state, whether lodged in the hands of one, few, or many.

at any time assented thereto, or agreed to exchange the liberties of a state of nature for the privileges of a member of that community. And this arrangement of Providence conduceth to the happiness of man, though it seemeth an infraction of his liberty ; for otherwise every infant must be unprotected, and every man remain an outlaw, till he had made an option of his country, and taken out his charter as a citizen.

Thus, however flattering to the love of liberty the idea of an original compact may be, and however useful to ascertain the rights and duties of magistrate and subject, yet in reality every man is adopted by compulsion into the society of which his parents were citizens, entitled only to that portion of the public wealth which accrues to him by inheritance, and precluded from all
right

right of occupancy over any other. If then his parents were so poor, as to transmit no patrimony to him, he is born the inhabitant of a land, every spot of which is appropriated to some other person; he cannot seize any animal or vegetable for his food, without invading property, and incurring the penalty of law. The same law too forbids him to become an effective member of any other society. He cannot emigrate without the permission of the government, so as to * *expatriate* himself, or serve in arms for his adopted, against his native country, without forfeiting his life as a rebel. Nor

* Though there should be found any instance of a state so particularly constructed, as to permit its subjects to renounce their allegiance at pleasure, which yet the author, from the whole of his inquiries, believes not to be the case in Europe at least, it is still perfectly sufficient for the purpose of this argument, that the constitution of these kingdoms allows no such liberty.

is all this any impeachment of the equity of the state, for without it the purposes of society could not be answered. Without exclusive property, there could be no regular industry; without subordination there could be no government or order; and without a power of commanding the persons and services of its subjects, the state might nourish drones or vipers in its bosom. Besides, the meanest subject hath hitherto no grievance, for he is in a state as good as the nature of society will admit, and far preferable to that of any lonely savage. His person is protected from violence; and though he hath no stable possession, his industry is free. His labour will be useful to some rich neighbour, and produce to him in return, a more comfortable subsistence, than falls to the share of a solitary lord

over a desert. So far he is more safe and happy than he could have been out of society.

But one of these inferior citizens, excluded from any source of support but labour, becomes by sickness, or otherwise, incapable of earning a subsistence. This is the case in question (which is proved in the former section to be but too common in this kingdom), and the inquiry is, whether his rich neighbours are, or are not, bound in *justice*, to provide for him a competent maintenance? If not, by what right did they take upon them to enact certain laws (for the Rich compose the legislative body in every civilized country), which compelled that man to become a member of their society; which precluded him from any share in the land where he was born, any use of its spontaneous fruits,

fruits, or any dominion over the beasts of the field, on pain of stripes, imprisonment, or death? How can they justify their exclusive property, in the *common heritage* of mankind, unless they consent in return to provide for the subsistence of the Poor, who were excluded from those common rights by the laws of the Rich, to which they were never parties? For the * chimera of virtual representation in the legislative body hath no place *here*, nor can the civilian find *here* any traces of an original compact entered into by the lower class

* That the notion of virtual representation is in part chimerical, will be evident to any man, who considers the frequent opposition of the local interests of boroughs, &c. (which generally influence the Representative) to the public good; and the case of the Poor is perhaps the strongest instance, that the whole body of the people are not virtually represented, because the interest of the Poor calls for a tax on the Rich, and therefore is in direct opposition to the supposed interest of all the Representatives, and almost all who are concerned in electing them.

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of people, where *the world is evidently not their friend, nor the world's law.* It would be a waste of words, and a disgrace to reasoning, to labour to prove a point so clear as this : that the richer members of society, who are a minority, have no right to exclude the lower class, who are a majority, from any portion in the public patrimony ; without securing to them the resource of a subsistence, when they must otherwise be reduced to the dreadful alternative of breaking through those regulations, or perishing by a dutiful observance of them. And consequently, as the welfare of the commonwealth requireth subordination and exclusive property, that it becometh the *indispensable duty* of the Rich, in whose favour principally that arrangement is made, to provide a competent maintenance

tenance for the Poor who are excluded by it.

The argument might be closed here; were the object of it merely to establish a speculative conviction, that the Poor are entitled to a support from the Rich, by the fundamental principles of equity; but as speculation, when opposed by interest, hath little chance of being reduced to practice, it will be expedient to proceed to the proof of the third position; and shew that in this, as in every other instance (whatever shallow pretenders may conceive to the contrary from their contracted views of either) sound policy is inseparably connected with virtue and true religion.

P O S I T I O N H I I.

That it is eminently for the Interest of the Commonwealth, that this duty be discharged in an ample and effectual manner.

AS it seems the primary axiom with all judicious statesmen, that public convenience, power, and wealth, arise from the multitude of people usefully employed; if it can be evinced, that a discreet management and maintenance of the poor will increase the number and industry of the people, this proposition will be demonstrated: and there will be no necessity of engaging in the various other proofs of which it is capable.

Let

Let us consider first, as it is first in its political importance, the case of the Infant Poor. It cannot long remain a doubt with any man of ordinary discernment, whether an established fund in every parish, county, or other more commodious district, for the support and education of destitute children, would not preserve the lives of many; and form them all to be more useful members of society, than they could be if abandoned to accidental alms, or trained to earn a precarious subsistence by begging. For the children in question must, in general, either remain in the cabin of some compassionate poor neighbour (as hath been shewn in the first section), who at most can only spare to them what is barely necessary to support life, without a thought of any regular instruction; or else they must be
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led about the country by some strolling beggar, in order to extort alms by their infant cries ; in which case ignorance and idleness would be the smallest evils in their education. Now on either supposition, can there be the same probability of their being *reared*, without any regular supply of wholesome and nourishing food, and without a possibility of medical assistance in sickness ? Or can they be as well fitted for the services of society, without any, or with a vicious education, as if they were, by the aid of some well conducted charity, principled in virtue, disciplined and inured to industry ? We might appeal to the public opinion, fully expressed on this question, in the popular contributions to Charity Schools in the capital : we might appeal to the apprehensions of the Legislature of the bad consequences likely

likely to arise from breeding up children in the trade of begging, which induced them to grant a power to certain magistrates to take away children from any strolling beggar, and send them to the next charter school: but that it would be an affront to the common sense of any reader, to multiply arguments or authorities to prove, that a regular maintenance and education of destitute children would secure more lives and service to the state, than a total neglect of them. But one circumstance more is worth notice, though a little beside the present argument, yet not foreign to the general scope of it; that a proper establishment for the children of the Poor, a vast majority of whom are Papists, would perfect the scheme of the INCORPORATED CHARTER SCHOOL SOCIETY (which

(which is very justly the favourite object of government), by distributing Protestant Working Schools throughout the kingdom.

Next to the infant, the Sick Poor claim our consideration, on the principles of political arithmetic, because the public is deeply interested in their speedy restoration to health and strength. And here it would be difficult to find a medium of proof clearer than the very point in question: that a ready care and cure of the diseases of the labouring class of mankind, will save lives, shorten the intermissions of labour by sickness, and of course increase considerably the aggregate of their industry. Not to mention the preservation of health and lives in general, by the improvement of the art of medicine, from public hospitals. But as an
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establishment for the sick hath received, though not an adequate support, yet a sanction from the legislature ; we will pass on to the

Third class of the Poor, and examine how far the same public expediency may take place, in favour of the aged. Now even though we should be so ungrateful as to forget the merit of these worn-out servants of the public, the expence of relieving them will be in a great degree, if not fully, repaid, by lengthening their lives, of course protracting the period of their service, and preserving entire the little industry of which they are still capable. For suppose that the aged labourer be able to earn one half of his maintenance, if a charitable fund be at hand to supply the other moiety, he will stay in his cottage, and employ his remain-

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ing strength in industry, instead of devoting his *whole time*, as he must at present, to the precarious and pernicious employment of begging. Two such paupers would be the addition of one effective man to public industry. If at the close of life they become an absolute burden, in that *short* interval indeed we have only to plead their former services, with this short remark; that if the interest of the public does not admit of relieving their wants, it would be a still higher degree of œconomy, and even of mercy, to adopt the *refined Indian* policy of putting an immediate end to them.

C O N C L U S I O N.

IF these three propositions be clearly established, and there remain no doubt but that the Poor of this
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kingdom stand in *need* of a public provision ; that the Rich are bound *in justice*, (though they neglect) to give it ; and that the *public interest* requires, that it should be given amply and effectually: from these premises necessarily flow the following conclusions.

First, that the *interest* of the state demands some *compulsory* law, that the Rich may provide a competent subsistence for the Poor.

Secondly, that it is the *duty* of the Legislature, (for Legislatures have their moral characters and duties as well as private men) to make such an arrangement, as will secure the just rights of the lower, who are not the least useful class of their subjects; and at the same time promote the general weal, by increasing the number and industry of the people.

SOME OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED.

As the rights of the Poor, and the consequent duty of the Legislature, are thus firmly fixed on the basis of policy as well as equity : it would be superfluous to add more, but that in a case where custom and private interest concur in raising prejudices, every opening to cavil should be guarded : and therefore the author thinks it adviseable to obviate those objections which have come to his knowledge, when a plan of this kind engaged the conversation of the public during the course of the last session of parliament. On that occasion he had the satisfaction of observing, that the distresses of the Poor were universally confessed and regretted,

gretted, and did not meet with any speculator in Morality who would not, on reflection, admit the indispensable duty of the Rich to relieve them. So that his two first positions seemed to stand unimpeached, and the whole weight of opposition to be levelled at the political expediency of a *compulsory law*, to constrain the Rich to discharge that duty. And this was branched out into two different objections : first, that a legal establishment for the Poor is a temptation to idleness and expence amongst the laboring class of mankind, and therefore *inexpedient* : secondly, that though in some respects expedient, it would be attended with an *expence* more than equivalent to that expediency. These two objections shall be considered separately ; which yet the candid reader will allow

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low to be a further indulgence to prejudice, because a demonstration of the wants of the Poor, and the absolute duty of the Rich to relieve them, in reason precludeth both individuals, and the Legislature from pleading political expediency. For what is that plea but a formal attempt to prove, that it is expedient for Government to acquiesce in the oppression of one division of its subjects, in order to secure to another an exemption to which it hath no right? An absurdity in politics, as well as morals, that neither needs, nor deserves confutation! However, as we fear not to join issue on the footing of general utility, we will proceed to examine these objections.

O B J E C -

O B J E C T I O N I.

That a legal establishment for the Poor is a temptation to idleness and expence amongst the labouring class of men, and therefore inexpedient.

THIS objection is grounded on a supposition, that a labourer will be less industrious and saving, if he be secure of a supply in time of need : and thence is inferred the inexpediency of establishing a fund for the maintenance of *any* Poor. Now though we should admit the supposition, which we shall hereafter prove to be at best very doubtful, the inference will by no means follow. For in the first section it was shewn, that the income of the lower rank of people is so scanty, that they seldom have it in their power to lay up

up a reserve sufficient for *their own* sickness, or old age; much less for their orphan children. Although therefore it be admitted that some Paupers may owe their distress to their own or their parents improvidence, yet there must be many more amongst a peasantry so ill appointed, who are objects of charity, in spite of the most slavish toil and the most rigorous parsimony.

But to take this argument in its strongest bearing, and confine ourselves to the case of an idle prodigal man, who in the extremity of age or sickness cries out for food or medicine: can any one avow that we should suppress every tender feeling, stop our hand when by the instinct of compassion it is stretching forth relief to him, and with a stoical indifference suffer him to perish; from a deep and doubtful speculation

whether such relief may not encourage idleness, and become, in the end, a political evil? And if we may, *without injury to the state* (and must, if we expect mercy) relieve the distress, though we blame the cause; wherein consists the inexpediency of obliging those of the Rich, who are too distant or dissipated to know, or too callous to regard the misery of the Poor, to contribute to its relief, and not throw the whole burden, (as at present) on the resident, the considerate, and the benevolent? For a legal provision hath this double advantage above voluntary alms, that it is at once most equitable to those who pay, and most equal and effectual to those who receive.

Now if no reasoning can justify such obduracy, as would permit a wretch to languish without help in his age, or sickness, because he had

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not made a provident use of his health and strength ; on what principle shall we conclude, from the imprudence of the parent, against all compassion to his orphan children ; on what pretext shall we exclude from the public care the distressed of the laborious and frugal, which were neither owing to their own, nor their parents political sins ; but took their rise from high rents and low wages, from the scarcity of bread, or the check of a manufacture, from the sudden increase of family, or the death of cattle, from disease, unassisted by medicine, and in consequence perhaps of the same want of help, the untimely loss of an industrious father ?

Thus it is clear, that the inference is by far too wide to rest on the premises ; and that it would be neither just nor expedient to refuse relief to
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the unavoidable distress of a great number of innocent and meritorious persons ; because, by a certainty of relief, a few others might be tempted to laziness and extravagance. But after all, is this apprehension itself well founded ? The objector must be little attentive to the ordinary conduct of the lower class of mankind, if he conceives that they are idle and profuse on a regular system, and not rather from the want of any. He must be little acquainted with the state of Europe, or he would have observed that the whole current of fact bears against his theory, and that in those countries where the Poor have the most ample and sure provision, (as in *England*, † *Holland*,
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† In HOLLAND, (according to the informations which the Author received in that country) when the Contributions in the places of divine worship, and the Collections made three or four times in the year from

and the canton of *Berne*) where, if this supposition was well founded, there would be a general idleness; there is, on the contrary, the most universal spirit of industry. He is further required to prove, that this *supposed* diminution of industry from a *security* of relief, will overbalance the *certain* deductions from labour, proved above to arise from the *want* of it; as loss of lives, of time by sickness, of education for the young, and of all disposition and even leisure for industry by the trade of begging, now the necessary occupation of such numbers. He is called on first to institute this balance, and demonstrate that it must turn in favour of

house to house, are inadequate to the relief of the Poor; the Deacons, whose province it is to distribute these alms, must apply to the Magistrate, who is to take such measures, as to him shall seem most expedient and effectual to supply the deficiency. In the canton of *BERNE* there is a parochial provision for the Poor.

his supposition; or he can with a very bad grace advance a vague surmise, founded on no calculation, unsupported by experience of human nature, contradicted by the practice of the most commercial nations, repugnant to the instinct of humanity, the maxims of justice, and every reasonable presumption of political expediency. Indeed a well-conducted provision for the Poor, is so far from being calculated to encourage idleness, that it tends to detect, and may be employed to punish and suppress it. It will naturally destroy all pretence for begging *, a nuisance both trouble-

* It will here perhaps be asked, Are there no Beggars in those countries where there is a national provision for the Poor? Yes, and there always will be, so long as there are thoughtless Rich people to encourage them. But a considerate man will pass them by, because he knows, that if really indigent, they are relieved; if pretenders, they should be punished. In this kingdom indeed, where the Poor have no national provision,

troublesome and pernicious ; which however the severest police can never restrain, until some public institution for genuine distress shall have drawn a line between want and imposture. A law prohibiting persons in want to beg, is just as wise, humane, and practicable, as a law prohibiting persons in pain to groan. To the real object it is at once tyrannical and ineffective, to the impostor it is equally nugatory, or rather a positive encouragement. For the former having a right to ask relief (by a law paramount to all others, that of necessity), under that right, which is before proved to be the right of a great number in this kingdom, a far greater number will ever securely screen a vagrant and idle disposition.

vision, whoever resolves not to give to a common Beggar, must abandon to destruction a great number of REAL objects, who have no resource but begging.

O B J E C-

OBJECTION II.

That though a legal establishment for the Poor be expedient in some respects, it would be attended with an expence more than equivalent to its expediency.

NOW this very objection is no flight presumption, of the absolute necessity of a Poor-tax. It must be grounded on a supposition, that the Poor stand in need of some further relief, than what is at present afforded them. For, if voluntary contributions are already sufficient, it vanishes of course; as no additional burden will be incurred, and the only alteration will be in favour of the benevolent, by a more equitable partition of the present expence. If more indeed be wanted, it hath already
ready

ready been proved, that both justice and the public welfare require that it should be given. But whence is the idea derived of so enormous an expence? It hath not yet been tried in this kingdom, and it surely is worth an experiment; there being no colour of reason, that the Poor should continue to languish under such complicated misery, because the Rich will not risk an imaginary inconvenience. But these apprehensions are favoured by the complaints of the *English* gentry, on the exorbitance of their poor rates. To this, there are many answers. First, it is well known that complaints do not always imply a grievance, especially where a tax of any kind is in question; and whatever may be the murmurs of the thoughtless, or unfeeling, the most virtuous and judicious part of the *English* nation have
ever

ever considered the Poor laws, as an honour to the wisdom and humanity of that trading kingdom. They have indeed frequently meditated some alterations in the detail of those laws, but that very attention proves their sense of the great importance of their general object: a repeal of them having never been in contemplation of those personages, who have at different times attempted to new model the management of the Poor. Secondly, if the *English* landholder pay more than the necessities of the Poor require, it is his own fault; he is intrusted by the legislature to grant and to expend it, and is invested with powers sufficient to prevent or punish imposition: if he be too indolent to avail himself of those powers, he may perhaps *suffer*, but he has no right to *complain*.

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Thirdly,

Thirdly, if there be imperfections and abuses in that system (which on the whole is contrived with so much wisdom, that they who have considered it most maturely, are least sanguine in their expectations of improving it), we are not limited to copy the errors of our neighbours, but may profit by their experience. Lastly, the expence of maintaining the Poor in *England*, where the labourer lives so much better, cannot with reason be applied to any calculations for this kingdom; because the utmost a pauper can expect, is such a kind of maintenance, as may be earned by the meanest labour. If, in opposition to this, it may be suggested, that the Poor are more numerous here; that indeed may augment the expence, but would be a strange plea against the obligation or

propriety of relieving them. But admit a Poor-tax to be a grievance to the Rich, by retrenching their superfluity ; and place it fairly in the balance with the Misery of the Poor, who, for want of that regulation, are robbed of the necessaries of life ; and the inconvenience of the former will be found lighter than *vanity itself*, from whence it arises. We are content to ground the whole merits of our cause on this competition, exemplified in a calculation not absolutely arbitrary. Suppose, on one hand, that the maintenance of the Poor would consume the twentieth part of the rents of the Rich ; (which is by no means probable*), and suppose on the other (what is much more likely), that every†

* See the Appendix.

† This proportion is founded on a careful examination of a parish containing upwards of 1600 families,

twentieth family will occasionally need assistance ; is it not far more reasonable, that every man of property should be curtailed of the twentieth part of his income by law, than that one person in twenty should be exposed to perish, because his landlord resideth in *England*, or in some distant county in this kingdom, or, though at hand, is ignorant or regardless of his distress?

And now I can only foresee one other species of argument against the utility of these speculations, arising rather from the obstructions to their execution, than objections against their truth or importance. They are too good to be put in practice ! says the desponding man of virtue. They are too refined and visionary ! cry the frivolous and corrupt ; who, without warmth of heart, or power of under-

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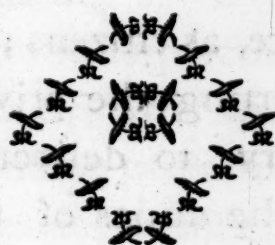
derstanding, to conceive any thing for the benefit of their fellow-creatures, have the presumption to measure all mankind by their own imperfect standard ; condemning as Eutopian, every thing that is good ; as wild, every thing that is, or appears to them, new ; and as impracticable, every thing which they have not abilities to carry into execution. I should not have mentioned the latter class, but to repress their petulant triumph at the simplicity of a projector ; who, in opposition to custom and prejudice, is hardy enough to plead the cause of justice, even in favour of the rights of the wretched : to let them know, that I was aware of their censure, and appeal from their summary and unweighed decision to the tribunal of common sense and virtue. The former, who,
from

from an anxiety for what is good, are apt to fear for its success, must yet allow, that it is the duty of a moral writer, to delineate virtue in her perfect form; though she should appear of too exalted a beauty to catch the eye of the vulgar, and of too exact a purity to captivate the affections of the corrupt. But why should they so far wrong the virtues of their country, as to allow any good thing to be impracticable? The Legislative body, after their bounty in the last Session of Parliament, deserve a greater confidence. Nor should the individuals of a kingdom, amiably distinguished for a liberal hospitality to the Rich, be hastily suspected of invincible parsimony and determined injustice to the Poor.

Thus hath the Author completed his argument in favour of a Poor Law,

Law, grounded (unless his wish has in this case laid an unperceived bias on his judgment) on unquestionable facts, and fair reasoning. In pursuing this delicate subject, whilst he was pleading the cause of the Poor, he wished not to offend the Rich; whilst he was asserting their rights as men, he hath endeavoured to inculcate the reasonableness of their subordination, and their obligations to obedience, as citizens; and whilst he was exerting the privilege of a free country, to deliver his sentiments on the duties of the Legislature, he hath studied to preserve the respect due to Government. He hath now discharged what he thought his duty, and recommends the cause he hath undertaken to the Mighty, to the only effectual, protection

tection of that Being, in whose hand
are the hearts of men, who delivereth
the Poor that crieth, the Fatherless, and him
who hath none to help him.



APPEN-

A P P E N D I X.

In which an attempt is made, to establish a measure of the contribution due from each individual to the Poor, on the footing of justice.

WHEN the above argument was finished, which was intended to lay before the public the duty incumbent on the Legislature to secure a subsistence for the indigent, it occurred to the writer, that a wish might arise in the mind of some individuals, to whom his plea in favour of the Poor, on the footing of justice, appeared conclusive, to see some measure established, by which each man might calculate his proportion of the common debt; and

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satisfy

satisfy his own conscience by discharging it, until it should be ascertained, and exacted by legal authority. Indeed, such a standard is a desideratum in ethics, as it is necessary in order to fix the boundary between justice and charity in our contributions to the Poor. At present, every contribution is called alms, and considered as an act of *bounty*. But if the Poor have a claim on every rich man founded *in justice*, that demand must be fully satisfied, before his offerings can deserve the title of Mercy, or Liberality. So far he is required not so properly to give, as to pay ; and if he refuse, is not only unkind, but unjust. As the intelligent reader must be sensible of the difficulty, as well as utility, of forming such a common measure, as will serve cases infinitely varied ; he will regard the attempt with

with an eye of indulgence, and candidly allow for inaccuracy or error.

If then the Rich are bound *in justice* to support the Poor, on account of their having appropriated to their own use the whole of the public patrimony, and excluded the Poor from the right of taking any portion of it, even for the support of life ; of course, each man is obliged to contribute to the payment of that common debt, in proportion to his allotment of the public wealth. But before we begin to tax any income for the Poor, we must deduct from it as much as is requisite to purchase for the possessor and his family, the absolute necessaries of life. No man can be bound to give to another, what is essential to his own subsistence. To this every man has that exclusive right, on which the very claim of the Poor is founded. But

how shall we fix that sum, which varies in every country and season ; by the lowest rate of wages in each country, which must be supposed a sum sufficient to maintain the labourer and his family ; and in this kingdom cannot justly be thought to exceed it. That being deducted, the remainder of every man's fortune must be accounted taxable to the Poor ; as being a superfluity above what is necessary to the support of a human creature. For though much, or all, of it, may be thought requisite to sustain the rank of the possessor ; yet no one man can want luxury and splendor as absolutely, as every other doth raiment, food, or medicine : nor, considering the natural equality of human creatures, can any man have as perfect a claim to dignity and affluence, as every other hath to a subsistence. Every man
therefore

therefore is bound *in justice* to contribute in such a proportion to his superfluity (that is, the excess of his income above the maintenance of a labourer), as, if universally followed, would leave no one unsupplied with the necessaries of life. Here then is the measure of each man's debt to the Poor, clearly fixed in the abstract. Whatever he gives beyond that proportion, in order to supply the defect of that justice in his neighbour, that sum, and that only, can be called Charity.

But how shall we apply this abstract standard to each man's income? Here the difficulty commences, and yet, even here, perhaps, is not unmountable. The same idea closely followed will suggest a method of calculating this contribution for landed property, which constitutes by far the bulk of the wealth of this kingdom,

dom, and would be no unreasonable measure for personal fortunes *. It is evident then, from the principles established above, that the proprietor and the richer tenants of every estate are obliged, *in justice*, to contribute to the maintenance of the Poor on that estate, in proportion to their income from it beyond a mere subsistence. For, from the labour of those cottagers ariseth the improvement and value of the lands ; and whence should the labourer draw his support in time of age, or sickness, but from those, in

* For a merchant, tradesman, or manufacturer is as much bound, and for the same reasons, to support those, whose labour he employs in his business, as the landlord to support his poor tenant. The lender of money on mortgage, or otherwise, who enjoys a portion of the revenues of the land or trade of the borrower, is obliged, in equity, to take on him the same proportion of the burdens attending it. The same may be said of the proprietor of stock in the Public Funds, whose interest is paid by a tax from every man's fortune.

whose

whose service he hath exhausted his health and strength.

It is obvious that the amount of this contribution cannot be fixed in any one proportion to the rent-rolls of estates differently circumstanced; but the estimate may be made by any Gentleman or his agent, with half the trouble now employed in setting land. However, in order to illustrate the principles laid down, and exemplify them in one instance, the Author hath adjusted such proportions as suit those lands he is best acquainted with; and about which he hath made as accurate enquiries as possible, in order to lay a plan for the better relief of those Poor, whom the Providence of God hath placed more immediately under his care; and this calculation may be easily applied, by parity of reason, to es-

tates of different degrees of cultivation, populoufnefs, and income.

Suppose, out of thirty * families there be at all times one incapable of earning a maintenance, nineteen having only absolute neceffaries, there will remain ten contributors in various proportions to the fupport of one poor family. Now, as this family will very frequently comprize feveral individuals, who can earn their own, and even more than their own, fubfiftence; or perhaps confift of a widow, an aged or infirm perfon, capable of fome little induftry; we may reduce the relief wanted by each family to the full maintenance of a fingle Pauper: for though more might be wanted in fome inftances, lefs would fuffice in

* Though there will probably be one in twenty, who occasionally may want affiftance, yet there will not be perhaps, on an average, more than one in thirty constantly in pay.

others.

others. If then we allow to that Pauper * one shilling a week, which will be sufficient, in general, to support life ; and levy that at the rate of two-thirds on the Landlord, (if his lands have been lately set), and one-third on his nine richer tenants, there will lye a tax of 1 l. 14 s. 8 d. a year on the former, for the subsistence of each poor family on his estate, where the leases have been lately renewed. Now it will be a very moderate allowance to suppose, that

* This allowance may appear too scanty to some benevolent persons, who wish to give to the Poor a COMFORTABLE maintenance; and may compare it with the expence PER CAPITA of the Charter Schools, or other charitable institutions. But they will be pleased to bear in mind, that this calculation is not intended to establish a competent measure for CHARITY. It aims merely to fix every man's ABSOLUTE DEBT to his poor tenants, what cannot be with-held without injustice ; without rendering him accessory to their destruction, if they should perish for want ; and perhaps chargeable with the same guilt, for abandoning them to perish, even though their lives should be accidentally preserved by the bounty of their indigent neighbours, who are not under equal obligations to relieve them.

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a tract of land (even in a populous country) containing thirty families, will pay to the Lord of the fee 150l. per annum, or 5l. per family ; and, of course, the tax of 1l. 14s. 8d. a year for the Pauper in that district, will amount to little more than one per cent. per annum of his rent. As far as the short experience of the author, in the care of an extensive and populous parish, of little manufacture, can enable him to judge : a regular contribution of one per cent. * from every Landlord, would (with the aid of the farmer's bounty in meal, potatoes, &c.) make such a provision for the Poor, as would take off from the landed Gentleman the imputation of injustice to his

* By fixing a certain rate per cent. on the rent-roll, this tax will lye proportionably light on lands cheaply set ; where, of course, the richer tenants, having a greater share of the profits of cultivation, are more able to contribute.

poor tenants *, under which he must at present labour, unless there be some defect in the process of this argument. Of this, however, the Author has so little suspicion, that he is ready to resume his defence of it against any objection, advanced with such candour and decency as to deserve attention.

* I say injustice to his POOR TENANTS, because, however liberal he may be in his contributions to the Poor at large, yet if he neglect the Poor on his own estate, who in some sort owe their indigence to him, he still remains their DEBTOR.

THE END.

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Author has to little suspicion, that he
is ready to resign his defence of it
against any objection, advanced with
such candour and decency as to de-
serve attention.

I say nothing to his poor tenants, because
however liberal he may be in his contributions to the
Poor at large, yet he is not the Poor on his own
estate, who in some few words of intelligence to him, he
will remain their Doctor.

THE END.